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ABSTRACT

If children are to benefit from a healthy, supportive early childhood experience, it is important to strengthen transitions between early childhood experiences in educational and care settings and the more formal educational system. This issue of Coordinator's Notebook focuses on strengthening linkages and transitions between home, preschool, and primary school. The journal is divided into five sections. "Removing Roadblocks to Success: Transitions and Linkages between Home, Preschool, and Primary School" (Robert G. Myers) examines several approaches in which transitions between early childhood experiences and schooling can be supported and linkages built between home, care settings, and schools to strengthen children's ability to thrive as they move out into the world. "Diagnosis and Solutions: Efforts to Address Transitions and Linkages in Diverse Countries" (Judith L. Evans) describes activities to strengthen linkages and transitions in Kenya, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Guyana, Colombia, and India. "Related Resources" presents available UNICEF titles related to this topic and information available on the World Wide Web. "The New CG Secretariat: An International Exchange of ECCD (Early Childhood Care and Development) Knowledge and Experience" presents the goals and activities of the newly restructured Secretariat, a forum for regional representatives and the donor consortium to engage in knowledge gathering, synthesis and dissemination, networking, technical assistance, and early childhood care and development advocacy. "Network Notes" reports on the activities, meetings and calendar of the Secretariat and of the Partners of the Consultative Group on ECCD. (KB)

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Transitions and Linkages:

Removing Roadblocks to Success: Transitions and Linkages between Home, Preschool, and Primary School **page 1**
Diagnosis and Solutions: Efforts to Address Transitions and Linkages in Diverse Countries **page 22**
Related Resources **page 42**
The New CG Secretariat: An International Exchange of ECCD Knowledge and Experience **page 45**

Network Notes, Page 64

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Removing Roadblocks to Success

Transitions and Linkages between Home, Preschool, and Primary School

ROBERT G. MYERS

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As we move toward the year 2000 and the goal of Education for All, some questions emerge about how to make that education successful for all.

In countries all over the world we hear the same concerns: too many children are repeating grades; too many children are doing poorly in school; too many children are dropping out of school in the first few years. For example, a study in the Philippines brought to light some disheartening statistics regarding the effectiveness of primary education.[1] A high dropout rate was found to be prevalent in primary 1 and 2, accounting for 60% of total primary school dropouts. In addition, national achievement tests indicated performance below 50% of the norm. These findings raised a wide range of questions that are of concern in many countries of the world: What is the quality of the education being provided for children at the primary level? What percentage of dropouts are children from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds or minority cultures? How can we help children to get ready for school? And, taking a slightly broader perspective: Once children arrive in school, how can we make sure that schooling sets them on the road to ongoing, lifelong learning and success?

Within the early childhood care community, most would argue that the first steps on that road are accomplished by providing children with a healthy, supportive early childhood experience. But if a child is to benefit fully from a good early start, something strong and sturdy must be built upon that foundation. In this article we take a look at the transitions children make between their early childhood experiences and their schooling, and we examine ways that those transitions can be supported and linkages built between home, care settings, and schools in order to strengthen children's ability to survive and thrive as they move out into the world.

Why should we be concerned about constructing links between home, preschool, and primary school? The first days and months of schooling are traumatic for many young children, and are stressful for most. Upon entering primary school, six- or seven-year-old children are thrown into situations quite different from what they are used to, and they are expected to adapt quickly. The following are some of the transitions children must make upon entering school:

- They make a shift from learning informally — through observation and practice in the home or through play in a preschool, to more formal modes of learning.

- They are expected to move quickly from an oral culture, in which they are only beginning to gain comfort and competency, to a written culture.
- Most children are expected to sit still and follow a whole range of new rules when they are used to more activity and freedom of movement.
- Many children have to make an adjustment from the practices and behaviour patterns of a minority or popular culture in their home, to the practices and expectations of a majority or dominant culture adhered to by the school.
- They are sometimes required to learn and use a

UNICEF 4681 Braeckman

new language, with little or no adjustment time or direct language instruction

- For some, the shift involves a change from being an only child or part of a small group of children in the family, to being part of a larger group. This requires them to quickly develop new social skills and to take on new roles, including the role of "student," which require greater independence of children who may or may not be developmentally ready for it.[2]

Even one of these challenges can block a child's healthy growth and success in the new setting. When several of these changes are encountered by a child at the same time, the stress of moving into the new learning environment of the school can be overwhelming. The result is often that the child fails to perform well, ends up repeating grades, becomes disaffected with learning, develops a sense of failure and low self-esteem, and ultimately drops out. Thus, the way in which the transition from home or preschool to school is handled can have important effects on children's future success and happiness, as well as on their ability to enjoy and take advantage of schooling in the present.

But concern with transitions goes well beyond concern for individual children and their futures; it encompasses the entire school system and its ability to successfully educate students for the greater good of society. Because the disjunction among diverse "worlds" or "learning environments" is usually greater for children from poor and disadvantaged or minority backgrounds, the failure to anticipate potential difficulties related to differences between home and school can perpetuate and even create inequities among the "haves" and the "have nots" and among different cultural groups in school and beyond. A society that aspires to equity cannot afford to ignore problems that arise in the transition from home to school.

The difficulties associated with the passage from home to school have been present to some degree as long as we have had schools. But interest and concern about children's transitions has grown of late. At least four factors have contributed to this increased attention.

School planners are more concerned with efficiency and quality. Interest in the transition to school has increased because many primary school systems have begun to put more emphasis on efficiency and quality, now that access and enrolment numbers have grown appreciably. For some school planners, children are viewed as productive resources to be transformed by school systems, whose goals are to achieve a good ratio of benefits to costs. One indicator of inefficiency in a school system is a high rate of repetition. Repetition often leads to dropout. Studies in many countries suggest that the highest rate of repetition is found during the first year or two of school. (Torres 1995) Accordingly, questions have arisen about how the transition to school might be eased so as to help children perform better during the first years, thereby avoiding repetition and, in the process, help to increase the efficiency of primary education.

The expansion of early childhood programmes has changed the nature of the transition. Another source of increased interest in transitions derives from the growth spurt of early childhood programmes over the last few years. Previously, the transition-to-school "problem" was defined for the most part in terms of the movement from home to school. Early childhood development and education programmes are (in some people's minds) supposed to help solve that problem. They are supposed to bridge gaps between home and school, leading to better adjustment to and performance in primary school. We have considerable evidence to show that is often the case.[1] But some early childhood programmes seem to do a better job of facilitating the transition than others. And, perhaps more importantly, the general atmosphere of most early childhood programmes is still very different from that of the school. Early childhood education, in many cases, is more closely aligned with principles of holistic care and development, or with making sure children have an enjoyable learning experience, than it is with preparation for formal learning and school settings. Indeed, many early childhood educators bristle at the thought that their purpose is to prepare children for school.

Ironically, the differences between early education and school may create new difficulties for children as they enter school, even as preschool preparation may resolve others. Although children who have attended preschools are generally more ready to learn, and stronger in their basic social, cognitive, and emotional development, they still must overcome the uncertainty and stress associated with moving into a new and different setting. Proponents of ECCD are more frequently raising questions about why it is difficult for *schools to adjust themselves to children* who come from stimulating early education environments. In some cases, under-trained teachers, who are confronted with a mixed group of children with preschool experience and children without, actually push the children with preschool experience aside, ignoring them until the others have "caught up". This has led educational planners to ask: What is the point of offering early childhood programming if the primary schools are unprepared for such children? This, of course, is the wrong question. A better question would be: How can we incorporate children's transitions to school and the schools' readiness to receive all children into our early childhood programming and planning?

Urbanization means that schools are increasingly "foreign". The apparent increased failure of children to make successful transitions into school may be a product of urbanization. When schools are located in small towns, children usually know all or most of the other children who will attend the school. Often the school is multi-grade so that children find themselves in classes with siblings who can help them adjust. It is usually possible to walk to school rather than to go in a bus, even if long distances are involved. In addition, many times teachers are already known to the children because they come from the local community. All of these factors make the school part of the child's natural "territory" and community; it is not a forbidding place. Yet, even in these conditions, the passage can be a difficult one. With the move toward urbanization, however, children may be sent to a large, unfamiliar school setting far from home, where they are separated from familiar faces and contexts. For these children the transition becomes even harder. There has been growing awareness among social planners in recent years that urbanization may be having a negative impact on children; this issue needs to be addressed.

A new interest in children with special needs has prompted new looks at the process of transition. Yet another source of interest in linkages and the transition from home and/or preschool to primary school comes from the increased attention being

given to children with special needs.[4] In the past, these children were often kept out of school. Recently, however, international and national movements have begun to open doors for them. The drive for the inclusion of children with special needs with other children into regular classrooms has stimulated efforts to anticipate and overcome the potential for stress and the negative effects associated with the inclusion process, in which children, families, and professionals must all make adjustments.

A Framework for Addressing Transitions and Linkages

Children's Multiple Learning Environments

Although we speak of "transitions" in this article, adopting a term that is commonly used, it would be more accurate to frame the issue in terms of the relationships among the multiple learning environments which make up the world of a pre-school or school-age child. These learning environments include the home, preschool or school, community, church, etc.,[5] all of which generally have different characteristics. Moving from one environment to another may be accompanied by vulnerability, uncertainty, exposure to new demands, and feelings of stress, and it may be beyond the developmental capabilities of some children to reconcile the cultural and behavioural expectations with which they are confronted.[6] The question is: How can these environments be linked together in a better way so that movement among them is not so stressful? Is the answer to this question to try to make all environments look alike? Or can we maintain the virtues of each? Finally, can we effectively help the child if we change only the home environment but not the school, or vice versa?

Figure 1 indicates some of the differences between learning environments and processes in the home, in early childhood programmes, and in the school. In general, the learning environment of most early childhood development programmes and preschools is probably closer to that of the family than to that of most schools, but it is usually more structured than most homes. As suggested earlier, the differences between these environments and processes are usually greater when we speak of a family living in poverty or a family that belongs to an ethnic or racial group that does not conform to the dominant culture of a country.

Figure 1. Learning Environments: The Home, Early Childhood Programmes, and the School

THE HOME	EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMME	THE SCHOOL
An informal, loving adult-child relation	An informal, supportive adult-child relation	A formal, less personal adult-child relation
Learning through imitation, experience, and trial and error	Learning through play	Learning through didactic teaching, memorization
Flexibility	Structure with flexibility	Rigidity
Contextualized learning	A mix of contextualized and decontextualized learning	Decontextualized learning
Modelling, one-on-one teaching	Numerous children to one adult	Many children to one adult
Adjustments to the interests and needs of the child	Adjustments to interests and needs of child, in the context of the group	Adjustment of the child to the demands of the school
Emphasis on the concrete	Use of concrete/objects to teach concepts	Use of symbols
Active participation in chores and rituals	Activity-based learning	Passive role in learning and school events
Learning in mother tongue	Learning in mother tongue, perhaps with the introduction of national language	Learning in the national language
Emphasis on language comprehension	Emphasis on language comprehension and production	Emphasis on language production
Emphasis on process	Emphasis on process	Emphasis on results

The characteristics in Figure 1 are obviously stereotypes of reality. Some teachers achieve a good personal relationship with the children in their class, respond to their personal needs and interests, and emphasize process, etc. Some parents do not have an informal and loving relationship with their children, are rigid with respect to what they expect from their children, show little flexibility in their actions, and do not adjust to individual needs, etc. Nevertheless, the chart offers a baseline description of common differences between three typical settings for children.

What are the needs of children in transition from home to school? The period of the developmental transition being discussed encompasses roughly ages three, or four, to eight. The actual age of entrance into formal primary school varies from country to country as does the age of entrance into an early childhood programme. To orient the reader to the child's changing needs from birth through the early primary years, an inset is provided on page 7.

Although every child is a unique person with an individual temperament, learning style, family background, and pattern and timing of growth, there are predictable sequences of growth and change during childhood. Proponents of early childhood programming argue that children need developmentally appropriate experiences which allow the child to have a healthy body, a capable mind, and appropriate social skills. One of the major challenges of each learning environment is to provide the child with conditions and experiences that are in line with these sequences of development.

The spurt of development that occurs between the ages of three and five, in which certain baseline cognitive abilities must be supported if the child is to thrive and become a capable adult, does not stop at age five or six, but continues through the age of eight. Thus the transition from the pre-school years into primary school is in fact an important stage of development and experience in its own right.

UNICEF 94-0759 Nicole Tourbouy

In many settings children's needs are not being met.

THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Very young children (birth–3 years) need:

Protection from physical danger
Adequate nutrition and health care
Appropriate immunizations
An adult with whom to form an attachment
An adult who can understand and respond to their signals
Things to look at, touch, hear, smell, taste
Opportunities to explore their world
Appropriate language stimulation
Support in acquiring new motor, language, and thinking skills
A chance to develop some independence
Help in learning how to control their own behaviour
Opportunities to begin to learn to care for themselves
Daily opportunities to play with a variety of objects

Preschool-aged children need all of the above, plus:

Opportunities to develop fine motor skills
Encouragement of language through talking, being read to, singing
Activities which will develop a positive sense of mastery
Opportunities to learn cooperation, helping, sharing
Experimentation with pre-writing and pre-reading skills
Hands-on exploration for learning through action
Opportunities for taking responsibility and making choices
Encouragement to develop self-control, cooperation, persistence in completing projects
Support for their sense of self-worth
Opportunities for self-expression
Encouragement of creativity

Children in the early primary grades need all of the above, plus:

Support in acquiring additional motor, language, and thinking skills
Additional opportunities to develop independence
Opportunities to become self-reliant in their personal care
Opportunities to develop a wide variety of skills
Support for the further development of language through talking, reading, singing
Activities which will further develop a positive sense of mastery of a variety of skills and concepts
Opportunities to learn cooperation and to help others
Hands-on manipulation of objects which support learning
Opportunities for taking responsibility and making choices
Support in the development of self-control and persistence in completing projects
Support for their sense of self-worth and pride in their accomplishments
Motivation for and reinforcement of academic achievement

Some school systems and governments test children for "school readiness" but often these tests do not focus on children's developmental status or on the experiences children bring with them to the school setting. Tests are most often designed to determine children's knowledge (e.g., their ability to recite the alphabet and perhaps read, knowledge of numbers and perhaps the ability to do simple calculations). This means that the school is not really given the information it needs to teach effectively, particularly for children who are not adequately prepared or who are developmentally behind the expected norm, or are otherwise at risk. Thus, programmes in the early years of primary school are most often planned around subject matter to be imparted to children, rather than around the *children as learners*.

Addressing children's transitions. Depending on how you frame the problem of transitions, and depending on the nature of what particular children (or groups of children) experience in their home, and what they experience in early childhood and school environments, there are very different approaches to transition that can be taken. To help frame the subsequent discussion, a rough three-part typology is used, representing different approaches to understanding both the problems and the solutions for connecting a child's home and early childhood experiences to the child's primary school experiences. (See Figure 2.) Each strategy is based on a different perception of where the main problem lies. The perception represented by the first of the scenarios described, that there are identified deficiencies in the child, home, or early care environments, has led many communities to institute ECCD programmes and child remediation programmes to address the deficiencies of children's readiness for school. In some cases, this approach is successful and enables more children to enter, stay and succeed in school. However, in many cases, these well-prepared students arrive at schools that are not prepared for them, and they fail to thrive despite good remedial or preventive early attention. In these cases, it is important to consider number two, that the learning environments of schools are not adequate to meet children's needs, and three, that the disjunction between a child's diverse environments needs to be addressed programmatically. Efforts to ease children's transitions and adjustments to school and to improve school performance may, and probably should, combine all three kinds of solutions. An elaboration on each of the approaches follows.

Approach 1: Changing the Child and the Home

Changing the child (and/or the child's home environment) so that the child will be more adjusted to the school is undoubtedly the most common approach taken in the attempt to ease transition and improve the achievement of children in primary school. A wide variety of early childhood interventions have appeared, focused on child or family. At least one objective of these approaches is to help prepare the child for entry into school. Although these programmes have often been effective, this strategy, if taken as the exclusive approach to easing transition, must be viewed with caution as well as with promise.

- First, focusing on the child explicitly or implicitly places the blame for failure in school on the child and/or the family, thereby promoting an aura of failure.
- Second, the strategy of changing the child often carries with it, intended or unintended, a devaluing of popular or minority cultures. This occurs

Figure 2. Typology of Approaches to Problems Related to Transitions

PROBLEM	SOLUTIONS
1. There are deficiencies in the child, the home, and/or in the learning environments in which a child participates prior to entering school that leave the child poorly prepared for school.	Change the child before she/he gets to school (or once she/he arrives). Change the home and community learning environments.
2. The learning environments provided by primary schools do not respond properly to the needs and conditions of the children they receive.	Change the nature of the first years of primary schooling.
3. The disjunction between the preschool environment and the primary school environment causes stress and is disorienting.	Smooth the transition: build linkages; strengthen coping skills and communication; develop a transition plan

because the process of setting the standards for entrance into school is usually controlled by a dominant culture and/or a central bureaucracy. The creation of curriculum may not, and often does not, adequately take into account cultural differences in goals and values, styles of learning, or languages used at home. A low value is placed on culturally-rooted standards and practices which are not represented in the dominant culture, implying that minority cultural practices are not desirable or useful. Making the child fit the school promotes an homogenization of culture rather than a recognition and celebration of cultural differences.

- Third, and related to the foregoing, approaches that seek to change the child tend to be negative. They begin with the identification of *deficits* in children or families (as defined by those in charge); the approaches then focus on how to "compensate" for these "deficits". This contrasts with a process which identifies strengths in children, families, and cultures, and uses those strengths as a basis for the "social construction" of alternatives.
- Fourth, changing the child to be better prepared for school may not mean that the child is better prepared for life because, in the process, skills and abilities crucial to everyday living may be discarded or weakened.
- Finally, placing emphasis on the preparation for school emphasizes the future and can, if exaggerated, have the effect of robbing the child of enjoyment and essential experiences in the present. A child, like any other person, should be able to enjoy what she or he is living in the present, even while looking toward the future.

With these cautions in mind, we ask: What does it mean for a child to be "prepared" for school, as typically defined? What are the so-called deficiencies that cause problems upon entry into school and sometimes lead to failure? Figure 3 sets out a list of possible "deficiencies" often cited as reasons why children do poorly in school, and for which some kind of early childhood programme is devised to help compensate or overcome.

The list is set in a negative framework, as is often done in programming, but it could be turned around to reflect a more positive approach. If this were done, the child, in order to be considered prepared to enter school, should be:

- *physically healthy and well nourished*
- *able to handle basic cognitive concepts*
- *able to communicate in everyday transactions and in the language of school*
- *able to relate well to others*
- *psychologically self-assured, with a good self concept*
- *able to work independently*
- *motivated to learn*

Figure 3. Deficiencies to be Overcome to Prepare the Child for School

DEFICIENCY	TYPICAL PROGRAMME SOLUTIONS
Poor health/nutrition that reduces activity levels and increases absences.	Provide health care, food and vitamin supplements, growth monitoring, health and nutrition education for parents, etc.
Physical or learning disability.	Provide special programmes, particularly those that help a child cope in the real world; provide parental orientation/education.
Delayed cognitive development.	Offer ECCD programmes which stress cognitive development, in centres or at home.
Language problems: Delay in learning languages. Need to learn other language.	Offer early education activities that stress language development, in centres or in the home; offer bilingual preschool classrooms.
Lack of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills.	Teach such skills as part of a general development programme or explicitly teach alphabets, writing, ciphering.
Social/ psychological insecurity and dependence.	Create programmes that offer counselling services, or that focus on general development in a way that helps children build social "survival skills".
Low expectations of the child by both the child and parents.	Help to show child and parents through ECCD programmes that children are capable of achieving.

It is common and appropriate for early childhood programmes to take an integrated view of what abilities children need to develop in order to enter into school, and incorporate these and all activities that will help to strengthen the various abilities listed above. In some cases, however, emphasis is placed on only one or two of the above, to the detriment of the others.

In sum, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of early childhood projects and programmes representing diverse goals, curricula, forms of organization, responsibilities for the adults involved, training methods, degrees of parental involvement, etc., all intended, at least in part, to change children so that they will be better prepared for school. As was said earlier, this approach of changing the child can be valid and effective as a method of increasing children's chances of success in school. However, ECCD professionals, who define early childhood as continuing through age eight, will argue that changing the child is only a part of the solution to the "transition problem". In fact, they argue, it is also necessary to restructure primary schools to better fit children's developmental patterns and needs. We will turn now to programmes that seek to ease children's transition to primary school by making changes within the school itself.

Approach 2: Changing the School

What is it about schools that makes entry difficult for many children? What can schools change in order to bridge the gap between home or an early education programme and the primary school? What can be done to help schools adjust to the many kinds of children they receive? What makes schools "friendly"?

Teachers in Primary 1 and 2 have an extremely difficult job to do. While in terms of the child's developmental needs it would be more appropriate for teachers in the early primary grades to function as early educators, administratively the primary school is located within the formal school system, which generally begins for children at age six or seven. This has many implications. Teachers in the early grades have to deal with a large number of students whom the law says must attend school. Furthermore, teachers are subject to many organizational conventions often used in primary school settings that are designed to make managing children easier: self-contained classrooms, age and ability groupings, and the division of curricula into discrete subject areas. Rules of the classroom have also been developed to help control children, such as asking permission, raising hands, remaining seated, etc. These practices are different from those within early childhood education settings where, for instance, there is less division in the curriculum, and where children are usually more free to move about.

Against this background, there are a number of initiatives and possible changes that might be instituted to make primary schools more child-friendly, to help bridge the gap between the home and/or early education settings and primary school, and to help teachers in the early primary grades address children's needs more appropriately.

■ Add programmes within the school that address children's needs.

Let us begin by looking at initiatives taken within schools that are intended to help the transition to school, but which, in fact, are really designed to change the child rather than the school.

1. Some primary school systems offer *readiness programmes*. On page 30 we describe a bridging (transition) programme put into effect in the Philippines that originated as a six-week readiness programme run by the schools during the summer immediately preceding entry into primary school. This is a model that exemplifies programmes which focus on intensive preparation of the child for school.

2. Another approach is to provide *tutorials*. Frequently tutorials are provided for children who are identified as needing extra help during the first year of school. This extra help is given to children in addition to the regular primary school curriculum. Although this practice may be beneficial, it can also become a kind of punishment for children and teachers alike because they are expected to use their free time for the tutoring, while others get to play or relax.

Readiness programmes and tutorials do not really change the school or adjust it to the child; rather, they seek to make changes in the child so the child will fit better into the school. They do not attempt to change teaching styles or curricula or other features of the school that might help children adjust better socially or learn better in the school.

The problem with the readiness programmes offered to children just before they enter school is that these programmes do not generally provide the long-term support which children with true differences in background and culture need to succeed. This highlights an important point: *transition programmes need to address not only the point of actual entry into school, a moment that looms very large in the minds of most children, but also what happens to children during at least the first two years of school.* The bridges between where a child is coming from, experientially and developmentally, and where we are asking him/her to go, cognitively and socially, generally require more time and individualized attention to construct than is available in short-term remedial programmes.

3. Some primary schools have sought to make school a more friendly place by providing *health and nutrition services* for the children—school breakfasts or health and dental checkups, etc. These efforts are necessary and good. They may help children to adjust to and perform better in schools by improving energy

UNICEF 1562 Ray Witlin

Children often need individual help in making the transition to school.

levels and attention spans or by reducing absences. But, again, such programmes are primarily directed toward changing the child rather than addressing deficiencies in the school.

■ Change the administration, organization, and rules in schools.

One strategy for addressing children's transitions is to make structural changes in the school or school system. For example the following approaches might be instituted.

1. *Lowering age of entry.* One factor that needs to be taken into account in the shift from home or preschool to school is the age of entry. The adjustment to school will not be the same for a child aged seven as for a child aged five. Lowering the age of entry into school, as is occurring in a number of countries in Latin America and Asia, does not necessarily make transition easier or harder. It does, however, change the level of what can be expected of a child prior to school entry and during Primary 1 and 2; it also requires significant changes in how the school functions, including adapting the curriculum for these younger children and preparing teachers to teach them.

The Philippine programme that began as a remedial programme before school entry has now been moved into the school system and has officially incorporated a segment into its curriculum labelled "Early Childhood Experiences" (ECE), which is followed during the first eight weeks of primary school. This transition occurred when the official age of entry was moved downward from seven to six years of age. (See p. 32.) A small-scale evaluation of the ECE experience suggested that the eight-week curriculum does con-

tribute moderately to improved performance of children in the first year and leads to a reduced number of dropouts, thereby providing the rationale for extending Early Childhood Experiences to the entire school system. Some educators in the Philippines look at this experiment as a means to push first grade teachers in the system to become less formal in their teaching methods and to become more oriented toward an active learning approach, a shift that should make the transition to school easier for children. Should this occur on a large scale, what began as a remedial programme will have served to transform the school in a significant way. On the other hand, teachers who have been used to formal teaching methods during the first year may find it difficult to make the necessary shift to nonformal methods.

Lowering the age of entry into primary school presents a challenge, an opportunity, and a potential danger. The challenge is to adjust methods and content to be more developmentally appropriate. The opportunity is to expose primary school teachers to more active learning approaches appropriate to younger children (and often to older children as well). The danger is that formal teaching methods used in the primary school years with the older children will be applied without adjustment to teaching younger children, making the transition to school even more difficult.

UNICEF 94-0141 Laura Lorenz Hess

Curricula should include opportunities for self-expression.

2. *Individual vs. group entry.* Most school systems admit children to school in groups with entry occurring simultaneously on a given date each year for all children throughout the system. However, some systems have adopted a practice of individual entry into school. In New Zealand, for instance, children enter school on their fifth birthday, regardless of when that birthday occurs during the year. (Renwick 1984; see case studies, p.28) Proponents of this system argue that individual entry helps to assure individual attention to children, and promotes the planning of appropriate learning experiences for their continuous development. Individual admission breaks with the "whole class" approach and undercuts set expectations in relation to standardized courses of instruction that both teachers and parents are likely to carry. It is argued that this system also encourages and facilitates initial contact between home and school and allows greater parental communication.

Opponents of this system point to the complications created by individual admission with respect to classroom organization and management. They argue that because it is difficult to establish set classroom routines, it is harder for children to settle into any regular pattern. Variations on the individual entry theme include admitting small groups to school each month and staggering the age of entry into primary school according to the child's level of preparation, as has been experimented with in South Africa (see p. 32).

3. *Repetition rules.* One change in school routines that has been made in some places, with the idea that it should ease transition during the first year of school, has been to introduce automatic promotion. There seems to be little agreement about the results of this strategy on the performance of children in cases where promotion is automatic at the end of each primary school grade. However, automatic passage need not be the procedure for all grades. Mexico and Peru, for instance, have recently introduced automatic promotion at the end of the first year only. This allows for the fact that some children are quicker than others, and that some arrive at school with skills and a disposition to learn, while others do not. Automatic promotion after the first grade is seen as a way of countering the sense of failure experienced by children who do not learn to read and write at the required level by the end of their first year and who are therefore made to repeat the year. The hope is that, with automatic promotion, children will be permitted to learn to read and write at their own pace over two years rather than one, and presumably will catch up by the end of second grade. The results of these experiments in automatic promotion remain to be evaluated.

4. *Class size.* Reducing class size could be a helpful way to ease the transition of children into primary school, especially in those cases where teachers have

to handle classes of forty or more children, a situation that is all too common. With large classes, the need to "manage" and "control" students becomes a first priority; educating them takes a back seat. Large classes not only make individual attention to students difficult, but they also produce a different kind of interaction among students who must learn how to operate within the context of the larger group setting.

5. *Physical proximity of preschools and primary schools.* It has been argued that locating preschools within or next to primary schools could help transitions for several reasons. First, preschool children would already be accustomed to coming to the primary school, and they would be used to sharing a larger space with older children. By placing the two together, older siblings (or even neighbours' children) could be charged with bringing the younger child to school, and help to provide security in the new environment while the child becomes acclimated to it. Also, physical proximity may encourage joint administration and supervision of preschool and primary schools.

Although this practice has advantages and may appear to be logical, the net effect may simply be to move the problems associated with transition down a year, or to the time that children first come to preschool. It may also result in a higher probability that early educators will be expected to behave like first grade teachers and that the preschool will follow a more formal curriculum.

■ Change the curriculum and pedagogical practices.

When children arrive at school they are often exposed to a lock-step curriculum in which all children are expected to learn the same material at the same rate and move together from one grade to the next, again at the same rate. In these situations, the prevailing attitude is that one curriculum serves all. Most primary schools today still practice "frontal" teaching (where the teacher stands in front of the students and dominates the discussion), and promote passive learning and memorization. In many primary schools, teachers come from outside the community; they may or may not be fluent in the local language. Class sizes may be very large, making it difficult to provide any kind of individual attention to children. As suggested in Figure 1, these characteristics are usually very different from those of the learning which takes place in the home or in preschool programmes.

There have been many efforts to drastically modify primary school curricula, methods, and organization. In the mid-1970s, for instance, innovative programmes were introduced into Indonesia and the Philippines that were intended to help children advance in primary school at their own pace, using self-instruction modules, and with a significant degree of peer teaching.

■ Change the teacher.

It is difficult to expect changes in curricula or methods to have an effect on providing linkages for children if major changes do not occur in the selection and/or training of teachers. It is common for teachers to have some sort of re-tooling in order to be able to handle a new curriculum, but it is also common for these training experiences to be short and superficial, with little follow-up or supervision. Thus, they fail to produce the needed changes. The New School in Colombia described on page 37, a transition project in Peru, and other programmes have made ongoing training a requirement for teachers wishing to participate in demonstration schools.

In some programmes, changing the teacher means changing the selection of teachers, rather than retraining existing teachers. For example, in rural Egypt, villagers without much formal pedagogical training are selected to become teachers, in part because they make a more direct link to the community, and in part because they have not been trained in the more rigid teaching methods characteristic of many teacher training programmes. In other cases, individual teachers are selected based on their attitudes, cultural expertise, and willingness to learn new methods, rather than on their current credentials.

Research literature on this topic suggests that the expectations that teachers have for students in general, as well as their expectations for particular students, is one of the most important factors affecting the performance of children in primary school. Teachers trained for a particular setting are more likely to have appropriate expectations.

Another aspect of teaching that can contribute to a difficult adjustment on the part of children is the practice of corporal punishment. Where this is a part of a tradition of discipline at home, corporal punishment may not contribute greatly to problems of transition to the school, but in some settings, this is the single most direct reason for children leaving school.

In *Bridging the Gap Between Home and School*, Sylva and Blatchford (1996) suggest that the following strategies should be employed to improve teaching in the early grades and to provide continuity between home and school:

- *Train primary teachers differently for lower and upper primary grade specializations.*
- *Recognize that the greatest educational gains are to be achieved by placing the most able and highly qualified teachers in the lower grades.*
- *Devise teacher training curricula to include guidance on young children's learning needs, language and bi-lingual development, and appropriate active-based pedagogy.*
- *Develop career structures for teachers to increase motivation and commitment, and provide ongoing training.*

A critical element in the adjustment to school is the language of instruction. UNICEF/4220/Sprague

■ **Incorporate local culture into the schools.**

Too often the idea of incorporating local or indigenous cultures into primary schools is restricted to providing stories and games taken from the local culture and/or to adjusting textbooks by including topics and illustrations that are culturally pertinent. These initiatives represent a good start toward incorporating local culture into the schools, but other changes may be more important. One of these has to do with creating culturally-linked modes of learning that bring the community into the school; another involves using the local language initially as the language of instruction.

Language learning and the language of instruction. A critical element in adjustment to school is the language of instruction. Many children grow up in bi-lingual or multi-lingual cultures. They may have a large vocabulary and may have learned to manage the grammar and rules of their mother tongue by the time they enter school, but they may have little or no facility in the language used for instruction in the school. They are not well prepared, therefore, to learn to read and write in the language of the school. One solution to this has been to help children learn the language of the school prior to entry; another has been to change the language of instruction used during the first years of the primary school.

The following quotation is taken from "Language Planning in Preschool Education." (*Coordinators' Notebook* 9) but the points are equally valid for the first years of primary school, and especially for situations in which languages and cultural differences are present.

> In group care settings for preschool-aged children, a number of factors can be identified as constituting likely obstacles to an optimal language environment. Very large groups of children and high child/adult ratios reduce the likelihood of one-on-one interactions between children and adults. Repeated failure on the part of the adult to respond to the child's communicative attempts (either because of disinterest, because of commitment to more adult-centred activities, or because the adult and child do not share a language) constitutes another environmental obstacle. Failure on the part of the adult to recognize the need to attend to all children, including those who may seem shy, less interested in the group activities, less responsible, or less competent can further diminish the quality of the environment for children. A strong programmatic emphasis on teaching academic skills (letters, numbers, colours, rote memorization of materials) may absorb energies that could better be devoted to real communicative activities and language-enriching conversations. The absence of appropriate books and materials that provide the context for conversations that build oral vocabulary and readiness for literacy may likewise reduce the value of the language environment to the child. (12)

An extensive literature exists dealing with strategies for introducing a second language to children, including bi-lingual programmes that utilize the native and the second language, immersion programmes in which an entire group of children from the same language background interact with specially trained group leaders using another language, and submersion programmes (entailing the greatest risk) in which a few

children whose first language is foreign to the staff are literally submerged in a second language setting without any provisions for language learning support. Experiments in such diverse settings as Nigeria and Peru suggest that using the mother tongue (for class work as well as in teaching children to read and write) during the first years of primary school, and treating the second language as a subject to be learned during this period not only helps school adjustment, but can also prepare children adequately for a shift to the dominant language during the latter years of primary school. Such mother tongue programmes are not always easy to carry out successfully, however.

Culture and learning. The question of language, central as it is, is only part of a larger issue of how to relate the surrounding culture to the learning that takes place within the primary schools. As indicated, this means more than simply introducing local topics and illustrations into textbooks. It means moving the school into the community and the community into the school, a feature that has been emphasised in many of the innovative primary school experiments.

In most of the preceding examples of changing the school to ease transition, the primary school is treated as a totally separate learning environment from that of the preschool or the home. No real notion of linkages is incorporated. Education and learning is not looked upon as an experience to be shared by all. There is little communication and contact among the people who are responsible for learning in the various environments. Indeed, there may be frictions and even jealousies among diverse stakeholders in the child's life. At the same time, we have seen that many of the programmes also make a special effort to bring the community into the schools. We now turn to looking at approaches that focus more specifically on building linkages between home, community, preschool, and school.

Approach 3: Supporting Smooth Transitions through Building Linkages—Education as a Shared Experience

A third approach to reducing the tensions that affect a child entering school is to build linkages between a child's home, care settings, other learning environments (such as religious or community institutions), and primary school. This can be accomplished by strengthening communication among diverse people with influence in a child's life. It requires that parents, preschool and primary teachers, and administrators work together to construct a locally-relevant (and when possible, an individually-tailored) educational process that facilitates children's transitions.

This approach of building linkages may or may not mean attempting to smooth the transition by making the child's various environments look more alike. To some extent, adjusting environments so that they will mesh more comfortably is both a positive and logical step. Most educators, for instance, would say that learning in the first grades of primary school would be facilitated by adopting more active teaching methods, by being more flexible, by attempting to create contexts for learning, by allowing children to learn in the mother tongue (with the dominant language taught as a second language), etc. Making such changes would move the school closer to both early education programmes and to the home.

At the same time, trying to make the school look too much like the home, or vice versa, should not be carried to extremes. Children learn different things from different environments. They can learn from contrasts as well as similarities, and it is valuable for them to learn how to manage themselves in diverse settings. Therefore, even while making some essential adjustments in the home or the school that may "smooth the transition," it is also valuable to:

- find ways to respect the unique and positive points of each environment;
- anticipate and provide orientation for changes that will be faced by children and parents;
- develop broad coping skills in children (rather than remould them to one environment or another);
- foster continuing communication among the adults in the child's life; and
- find means of supporting each child in his or her particular passages.

These strategies do not depend on changing the nature of the child or the nature of the school. They require planners to anticipate changes children will face, to address the expectations and attitudes of both adults and children, to build cooperation among the diverse influential people in a child's life, and to improve communication and linkages between home, early childhood programmes, and school. All of these activities should be directed toward making learning a shared experience between children and the adults in their lives. An interesting example of this approach comes from Chile's Transitions from Home to School Project (PTHS), which is composed of three separate programmes that provide support to the adults in children's lives, from birth to age eight. The project has the following components:

- The Parents and Children component (Proyecto Padres e Hijos). This intervention works with groups of mothers of small children (0–5 years). The aim is to empower parents so that they can create more favourable conditions in the home and in the community for the development of the full potential of their children.
- The Educating Together component (Proyecto

Educando Juntos). This project involves the creation of collaborative relationships between parents, kindergarten teachers, and primary 1 and 2 teachers to bridge the gap between home, kindergarten, and primary school. It is expected that this will result in improved conditions for the cognitive and emotional development of children from kindergarten until the end of primary 2, as well as in facilitating children's school learning.

- The Teacher Development component (Proyecto Capacitacion del Magisterio). This intervention is directed toward kindergarten and primary 1 and 2 teachers. The objective is to promote team work between kindergarten and primary school teachers and to prepare them in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The emphasis is on the production of written material and on curriculum content that is culturally relevant to the life experiences of children from poor communities. (Benito and Filp 1996)

How can the administrative and organizational, as well as the social and psychological, barriers between learning environments be overcome? There are several ways that barriers can be reduced or even removed entirely. Providing continuity—of curriculum, teachers, and methodology—is one way this can be achieved. Increasing communication and cooperation between all those who work for the benefit of the child is yet another.

■ Seeking continuity in teaching methods and teachers

1. *Continuity of curriculum.* Improving the continuity of what and how children are expected to learn as they move from home or preschool to school means at least two things. First, it means reducing the discontinuities that often occur as a child moves from a personal, open, active curriculum in the home or preschool to an impersonal, passive, and didactic approach in primary school. To do that well, parents, preschool teachers, and primary school teachers should sit together to see where, in each particular setting, adjustments can be made (see section below on working together). In some cases, this may mean that parents or preschool teachers pay a bit more attention to pre-reading, writing, and ciphering skills than they have in the past. It may include such simple things as helping a child learn the letters of his or her name or how to hold a pencil. In other cases, it may mean that primary school teachers can be helped to see ways to introduce more active learning methods into their teaching.

But continuity also means assuring that the curriculum, whether in preschool or school, evolves in a way that is developmentally appropriate. This is important for children in general, but it is particularly crucial for children who may be developing at rates that are different from the norm or from some imported definition of the norm. To seek this continuity, the curricula of preschools and primary schools can be re-examined in light of what research literature identifies as age-appropriate for the country and cultural groups involved. Countries or states may need to do some assessments of children to understand more clearly what developmental characteristics their children are expressing at various ages in their particular context. But perhaps more important, flexibility needs to be built into all curricular plans, in order to make them responsive to the needs of particular children as they cross the line from home or preschool to school. That is very hard to do when one adult is faced with forty or more children, or even twenty-five children, and a fixed syllabus in the first grade. It is very hard to do without extensive, ongoing communication between parents, preschool teachers, and primary school teachers.

2. *Continuity of Teachers.* In some places, a bridge is made between preschool and primary school when teachers move with a particular group of children as they cross the boundaries between preschool and primary 1 and 2. In this case, children do not have to adjust to a new teacher as they move because their teacher moves with them. These children will have a better notion of what to expect since they are already familiar with the teacher's style and approach. This arrangement also has the potential advantage of providing continuity for the children as they move through the period of learning the basics of reading and writing because they do not have to adhere to a fixed schedule or adjust to a different person or style of teaching. Obviously, like any other, this system has its drawbacks. If a teacher is not adequately prepared, is not flexible, or if a particular teacher and child clash, this system may not work well, and a child may be condemned to three years, instead of one year, of reading and writhing.

Another arrangement is for children to be grouped in multi-age, multi-grade classrooms, involving children at the kindergarten, first, and second grade levels, breaking the traditional age-grade-teacher mode of organization.[9] Multi-grade teaching is difficult. It involves particular skills and support, not only from the school, but also from parents. By necessity, it often occurs within the primary schools in rural areas, where teachers with few children combine several years, or sometimes all six years, of primary school in a one-room schoolhouse. But instances of combining classes that cross the preschool-primary school line are less common. In such cases, peers can be drawn upon to help with the teaching and learning, but caution must be taken not to hamper the learning process of faster students, in favour of having them help slower ones.

■ Orientation and communication

Both children and parents need orientation to what

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will be expected of them as their children enter school, and to how school works. This can be accomplished by arranging orientations well in advance of entrance into the school.

In some locations, orientation of preschoolers to school occurs naturally or informally. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, for instance, it is common for older children to bring their younger siblings to school with them when they cannot be attended to at home. School and its routines become familiar to children long before their official entry into school. In rural Mexico, it is not uncommon for families to arrange for children to come to school as "oyentes" (listeners) for an agreed-upon time during the year prior to their formal entrance.

More formal arrangements for planned visits to schools are arranged, for instance, in Singapore and in Guyana, where one activity during the last year of preschool is to visit primary school for at least several days.

In Lesotho, a novel Child-to-Child programme has been developed to help orient preschoolers to school. Primary 1 children are paired with preschoolers and accompany them to the school so that the younger children can learn about what happens in the first year of school.

Meetings with parents before school begins, although an obvious way to orient and communicate with parents, is not as common an occurrence as one might think. The registration process provides an opportunity that is not often used to orient parents to school. Registration is more often used as a time to take care of bureaucratic demands than it is as a time to help parents find out about how the school works, to meet teachers, or to learn what is expected once school begins. However, earlier and more frequent modes of orienting parents are advisable, conditions permitting. (See section below on transition planning.)

Communication between parents and teachers is often seen as a one-way street in which teachers notify parents about what is expected of them when their child enters school, and then about how their child is doing during the school year. Clearly, communication should be a two-way street in which parents also provide teachers with information about their child. This would imply that parents are able to assess and articulate their child's abilities. For some parents this is true. In other cases, parents need help to see the relevancy

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It is common for older children to bring younger siblings to school with them.

of their situational and intuitive familiarity with their child, and to learn ways to articulate clearer observations about the child's strengths and needs.

■ Working together

1. *Preschool and primary school teachers* usually work separately. They train separately. They plan separately. They seldom communicate about the history of a particular child. It is possible, however, to create processes that will help these two groups of teachers to train, plan, and work together. This has been done, for instance in Guyana (see p. 34), where joint workshops have been established for preschool and early primary school teachers. The main purpose of these workshops, beyond building personal communication and relationships, has been to see ways of adjusting curricula to the benefit of the child.

Working together has been formalized in some places in France by organizing team teaching in which preschool and primary school teachers work together in the same classrooms and are supervised by the same supervisor.

A process of transition planning for children with special needs, taking various forms, has provided another way to bring together teachers in sending and receiving institutions. (See below.)

2. *Parents and teachers.* Schools are often closed to parents, making it difficult to encourage teachers and parents to work together. In some systems, this separation is fostered because it is thought that teachers are the experts and that participation by parents in the formulation of the curriculum or directly in classrooms will undercut good teaching. If teachers carry such attitudes toward parents, although they may communicate with parents from time to time, it is highly unlikely that they will work together with parents in any significant way, despite the presence of Parent and Teacher Associations.

In cases where parents have traditionally been shut out of schools, developing cooperative transition programmes might serve to open the school to them. Focusing directly on improving children's transitions may make it easier for parents and teachers to develop a good working relationship. It is less likely in such systems that teachers will be open to the actual presence of parents in classrooms, at least in the initial stages of building relationships with parents.

Many teachers would like to be able to work more closely with parents at the point their children enter school and/or during the school year itself, but do not have the capacity to do so. Typically, teacher training involves such areas as how to teach a particular subject and how to deal with children, but it does not include how to work with adults. This requires that a teacher be able to communicate well. Unless teachers have good self-esteem and are comfortable dealing with adults, it may be difficult for them to have meaningful communications with parents. With this insight in mind, it is possible to fashion training programmes for teachers that will help them work more effectively with parents.[11]

3. *Involving the community.* Making the school a part of the community and vice versa can help transition. This can be accomplished in several ways: when the school building is opened for community events; when teachers and staff at the school participate in community activities, and thus are familiar to community leaders and parents; and when the community is asked to help supply the school with what it needs, including expertise in particular topics and processes. With this kind of reciprocal relationship there is more likelihood that fruitful communications can be set up to benefit children, families, and the school.

Incorporating the features discussed is a model of primary school education for rural areas called the New School (Escuela Nueva), which evolved in Colombia over the period from 1975 to 1980. A basic assumption of this experiment was that for children to learn better it would be necessary to change the curriculum content, strategies of teacher training, and the administrative structure and relations of the school to the community.[12] Without attempting a complete description of the system (see page 37 for a fuller description of the model), here are some of the innovative features of the New School:

- Teachers are trained to be "facilitators." Materials let children progress at their own pace.
- The system tries to maximise student involvement on several levels: whole-class discussion, cooperative groups, and individual projects, and by bringing students' cultural and personal experience to most learning situations in order to make the classroom instruction relevant.
- Students simultaneously learn to learn by themselves and progress toward self-reliance by making decisions and by bringing their own knowledge into the learning environment.
- Student learning is enhanced by actively involving parents in the support of their children's learning.
- The writing curriculum emphasises meaningful written communication as the final step of a thinking process. It tries to meld learning the mechanics of written language (spelling, punctuation or grammar) to the act of communicating in writing.
- The self-instructional textbooks draw on the experiences and knowledge of students, as well as on the realms of experience that are less familiar.

Other examples of radical changes in the primary school curriculum and methodology that involve working with the community come from such far-flung places as Mali, Egypt, India, Bangladesh, and Chile.[13] In general, these examples are innovative because they involve village schools that promote more active learning, that are flexible in the application of their curricula, and that bring the community

into the school, all of which help promote not only successful transition, but also ongoing learning throughout the primary school years.

■ Creating transition plans

One way to bring together a number of the suggestions that have been made for easing the transition from home to school, or from preschool to school, is to establish a process for creating and implementing transition plans. A recent literature dealing with the transition of children with special needs from infant programmes to preschool and from preschool to primary school provides us with a number of lessons and experiences that may be applied more generally. A law passed in the United States in 1986 mandated provision of preschool for children with special needs. This led to concerns about how these children's passages from one experience to another would be made, and to legislation which required that transition plans be established to smooth those passages.

In the course of creating, implementing, and evaluating various transition models, additional clarity has been achieved about the most important features of a successful transition, as well as about the needs of children, parents, and professional providers in the process. Several models now exist for developing transition plans and for training individuals who need to be involved.

The following factors for success in transitions were identified:

- *inter-agency cooperation*
- *parent involvement*
- *preparation of the child's environment*
- *planning*
- *communication*
- *shared information*
- *trust*

Parental needs were also identified, including: an ability to assess the child's needs; an understanding of the placement process; knowledge of how to seek out related services (e.g., transportation, speech-language therapy, physical therapy); legal information; someone with whom they can meet prior to the transition and to whom the parents can relate specifically in the new setting (an assigned contact person).

Similarly, professionals' needs were identified. They included: knowledge of federal and state laws; knowledge about how to involve parents; communication skills; knowledge of how to convene a meeting and what to cover; knowledge of available resources (particularly health resources); understanding of the stress that families and children experience and conditions that add to that stress; knowledge of how to assess children; and an understanding of the timing of transition.

In a 1990 issue of *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, several experiments in building transition plans are presented, some of which put greater stress on the child and "building survival skills," some of which stress "parental empowerment," and others of which stress training for providers to carry out a leading role in the process, all within a larger framework of working together. Issue number 22 of the *Coordinators' Notebook* will focus on inclusive education and special needs education in more depth.

Conclusions

There is ample reason to put energy into easing the transition from home or preschool to school because doing so will bring benefits to individual children, to the school system, and to society at large. Benefits include: reduced levels of personal failure, repetition, and dropout; additional interest in learning on the part of children; and an increased level of skill that children will continue to use throughout their lives.

Transition is most effectively addressed when it is viewed as an ongoing process which begins before school entry, involves particular problems at the point of entry, and also requires attention during at least the first year or two of schooling. Accordingly, it is necessary to seek appropriate ways to socialize/orient parents and children well before entrance into primary school. It is also necessary to seek adjustments within the school that will facilitate children's entry, and to strengthen the abilities (and willingness) of teachers, family members, and others to support the child throughout the first years of schooling.

In sum, although the process of shifting among different learning environments can be stressful and sometimes damaging to children, there are also many ways to anticipate problems and address them so as to reduce stress, maximise success in the early school years, and build an appreciation for learning. The task requires, above all, cooperation among parents, community members, and service providers. To achieve that cooperation, the education of children must be viewed as a shared responsibility. This means that parents must recognise and exercise their educational capacities and that schools must open their doors much wider than they have in the past to parents and the community. Such direct linkages can foster changes in the child's various worlds of learning, and can also allow the best of each world to be appreciated and built upon, as the marvellous process of development proceeds during the early years.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Richard Heaver and Joseph Hunt. *Improving Early Childhood Development: An Integrated Program for the Philippines*. (Washington D.C.: World Bank 1995), p. 4.

[2] The three shifts from popular culture to dominant culture; from oral to written culture, and from personal identity to role identity come from work done by Johanna Filp and others at the Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE) en Chile. See, for instance, J. Filp y A.M. Cabello, eds., *Mejorando las Oportunidades Educativas de los Niños que Entran a la Escuela: Taller regional sobre la transición del niño de la familia a la escuela* (Santiago, Chile: UNICEF y el CIDE, 1992), pp. 9–10.

[3] For example, see the review of longitudinal studies provided in Myers, 1992a.

[4] See, for instance, *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1990), the entire issue.

[5] The first definition of "transition" that one encounters in most dictionaries is, "passing from one condition, form, stage, mode of being or place to another." Implicit in this definition is the idea of leaving behind the previous state. As a child develops, she leaves earlier stages of development behind. This kind of transition would be true whether or not a child enters into school at age 5 or 6 or 7, or never enters into school. On the other hand, entrance into school normally indicates something *new* for the child. The transition represents an additional setting for the child, not a replacement, because the child does not leave the family behind. With few exceptions, she continues to live with the family, spending the majority of her time there so that the most important influence on her life continues to be the family. With the entrance into school (or into a preschool programme), the child is entering an additional learning environment, but is not passing from one to the other, learning occurs in multiple environments. In the case of a change from a preschool programme to primary school, it is more legitimate to use the phrase transition because the child does leave behind the preschool in order to enter into the primary school.

[6] One way of looking at this problem is in terms of the movement of children from one "developmental niche" to another or from one "eco-cultural niche" to another. See the theoretical work of Super and Harkness (1987) as well as that of Brontenbrenner (1979).

[7] In order to understand the nature of the experience and capabilities of a four-year-old, and how that relates to later learning when the child has completed a year of primary school (i.e., at age 7), a multi-country study is being conducted. (Olmsted & Weikart 1989) It is anticipated that the relationship between the kinds of experiences and abilities that children evidence at age four can be related to their skills, knowledge, and abilities at age seven. This would provide guidance on the kinds of experiences children should have during the pre-school years to prepare them better for primary school.

[8] See "Botswana: Acculturation and preparation for school." *Bernard van Leer Newsletter*, No. 81 (January 1996), pp. 6–7.

[9] In Mexico a bi-lingual programme exists but is not applied with any rigour because teachers do not like to use the mother tongue and/or because parents often insist on the use of Spanish. Parental insistence is linked to the fact that, historically, many children have dropped out of school by the third grade and parents want to ensure that their children have learned Spanish prior to that point. Now that the dropout rate has been greatly reduced, the previous attitude continues even though it would be possible now for the official bi-lingual programme to work.

[10] An excellent example of such teaching is vividly described and analyzed in L.S. Goldstein, "Caught in the middle: Tension and contradiction in enacting the primary grade curriculum." *Curriculum Inquiry* (in press).

[11] An excellent example of such training is found in the New Educational Spaces project in Mexico, funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In this project, preschool teachers operating popular, community-based centres, have been provided, at their request, with training to help develop their self-esteem, to be able to speak well before a group, and to develop their own reading habits.

[12] This model has been described in many publications. See, for instance, V. Colbert, C. Chiappe and J. Arboleda, "The New School Programme: More and better education for children in rural areas." Bogotá: Ministry of Education-UNICEF, September, 1990; or E. Schiefelbein, "In search of the school of the XXI century: Is the Colombian Escuela the right pathfinder?" (Santiago, Chile: UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, and UNICEF, September, 1991.)

[13] Many of these examples and others are set out in publications from UNESCO-UNICEF issued as part of a project called "Education for All: Making it Work." The project has presented the cases in booklets, and through films contained in the Education for All video bank. Other interesting cases are described in publications of Save the Children-USA or the Aga Khan Foundation (e.g., M. Khullar and S. Menon, "Innovative approaches in early childhood education," September 1996 which describes an initiative for providing primary school education to children of the urban slums of Jaipur, Rajasthan.)

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Diagnosis and Solutions:

Efforts to Address Transitions and Linkages in Diverse Countries

COMPILED BY JUDITH L. EVANS

Some Experts Give Their Opinions on the Problems and Offer Possible Solutions

Little research exists on the effectiveness of transition support programmes. The dearth of programmes that have been systematically implemented and evaluated points to this as a significant lack. Nonetheless, a number of professionals and practitioners from around the world have recognized the problems all children face as they encounter the social and intellectual challenges of primary school. Within their own systems they have attempted to develop strategies that facilitate the transitions children are faced with as they move from home to an early childhood programme and/or into primary school. In the following pages we will present several examples of solutions that have been proposed or tried.

Kenya

In Kenya, discussions on the quality of both preschool and primary school education have led to an awareness of the importance of providing for the transition between the two. Discrepancies between preschool and primary school methodologies have been identified as possible impediments to children's success in school. In line with this, suggestions are made about ways to improve existing structures which provide support to children entering primary school and, perhaps more important, to create new structures which can bridge the gaps between preschool and primary school.

■ A Discussion of the Link Between the Preschool Curriculum and the 8-4-4 Standard One Curriculum in Kenya

Swafiya Said, Madrasa Resource Centre, Mombasa, Kenya

Hamfa. How do you like your new school?
Ghaniya. I don't like the new school at all.
Hamfa. Why don't you like it?
Ghaniya. It's so big and noisy.
Hamfa. Keep on smiling and you will get used to it.
Ghaniya. But I don't like the teacher, she shouts and bangs on the table. Do you know that the teacher does not know how to welcome guests? She beat me on my first day, and I was not the one making noise.

The above exchange took place after the first day of primary school for a six-year-old in Kenya. Ghaniya, an intelligent little girl who had progressed very well in preschool, is quick to respond to the difficulties she encountered on her first day of primary school, difficulties that can make the entrance into school a negative experience. Ghaniya's first exposure to primary school is, unfortunately, typical, and, studies indicate, might well influence the rest of her school years. Encountering such a negative learning environment during the primary years can create obstacles which block future success in school.

The new and vastly different environments children encounter upon entering primary school often

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become handicaps to their performance and negatively influence their desire to stay in school. Among the drastic changes children encounter in moving from one environment to the next are: changes in attitudes, on the part of both teachers and parents; changes in expectations; changes in classroom arrangement (there may be rows of desks instead of small tables); an increase in the number of subjects; and changes in the learning processes. All of these can create a large, unintended gap which can hinder the success, or at least the expected progress, of many children.

Ghaniya's responses serve as an illustration of the gap that exists between the different expectations teachers have of children in the pre-primary school and of those in the primary school. Parents also tend to expect more from their primary-school-age children than they do from their preschool-age children. One example of this is that parents will carry or walk preschool children to preschool, but once the children are in primary school the attitude changes to, "Now you are a big boy—you can walk to school on your own."

Education is a continuous, lifelong process, which starts as soon as one is born. Since preschool education is the basis of formal learning, special attention must be given to its implementation and to determining how it can help children to develop. The following is an overview of preschool provision in Kenya, including its history, its curriculum, and its objectives. This is followed by a discussion of primary school objectives. Finally, the methods and learning processes of both the preschool and primary level curriculum will be compared, leading to a discussion of the perceived gaps in classroom conditions. The attitudes and commitment of teachers at both levels of schooling are also mentioned. And finally, linkages to bridge gaps between preschool and primary education are suggested.

Preschools in Kenya. The existing system of providing for early childhood education is community based, in the sense that it is managed and run by the communities through their committees. 75% of the preschools in Kenya are community owned. Kenyan communities are diversified, and therefore, so are the preschools. There are many different types of preschools in Kenya established by different groups or organizations, such as religious organizations, employers, estates or parastatal bodies, women's groups, voluntary organizations (e.g., Rotary Club, Red Cross, etc.), private communities, individual foundations, and local authorities.

In Kenya, the educational philosophy behind the building of schools is based on the concept and practices of a *Harambi* spirit—pulling together. Through the *Harambi* philosophy, communities are strongly encouraged to establish more preschools to keep up with the rapidly growing demand for them. Although the majority of the community-based and private preschools have no uniform curriculum, there are national guidelines which they can follow.

The "Guidelines for Preschool Education in Kenya" (1984), issued by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), is a small book of barely seventy pages. Within the Guidelines, KIE has done a very good job of providing the basis for the preschool course in the following ways: in defining the curriculum; in selecting what is to be learned and taught; in determining how the material should be learned and taught; in developing guidance on how to implement the curriculum in varying school contexts; and in providing for types of pupils, social situations, and physical environments.

The main goal for Kenyan preschools, as stated in the Guidelines, is "to prepare and equip the youth to be happy and useful members of Kenya society." The guidelines suggest that the school should enable children to develop physical skills, the concept of numbers, cognitive skills, knowledge of their environment, the ability to express ideas in words, and to gain awareness of temporal and spatial relationships.

The following are objectives for preschool education in Kenya:

- to provide an informal education geared toward developing the child's mental capabilities and his or her physical growth;
- to make it possible for the child to enjoy living and learning through play;
- to enable the child to build good habits for effective living as an individual and a member of a group;
- to enable the child to appreciate his cultural background and customs;
- to foster the spiritual and moral growth of the child;
- to develop the child's imagination, self-reliance, and thinking skills;
- to enrich the child's experience so as to enable him/her to cope better with primary school.

There are two sections in the Guidelines. Section I includes notes to teachers on important issues like understanding children, the child at school, general teaching methods, provision of materials and equipment, organizing and arranging a classroom, programme of activities, and collection of simple language skills. In Section II, pre-school activities, such as language development and pre-literacy activities, pre-numeracy activities, environmental activities, social activities, pre-science activities, creative activities, arts and crafts, music, and outdoor and indoor activities are provided so that even teachers who have not gone through any training can have a good idea of what preschool learning is all about. However, while the guidelines serve as a curriculum in those schools with teachers trained through the national training programme, the majority of preschool teachers have not seen them, and therefore do not rely on the guide-

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lines for assistance. (Currently there are over 26,625 preschools teachers—2/3rds of whom have not been trained—serving over 800,000 children.)

The ideal preschool. The ideal preschool provides for the all-around development of children, namely the stimulation of their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual capacities. The ideal school is a place where:

- Teachers believe that children come to them with a wealth of knowledge from home, knowledge upon which teachers need to build. This helps teachers to establish a warm relationship between school and home.
- Teachers are friendly, approachable, supportive, and ready to facilitate children's learning, while bearing in mind that learning takes place through interaction with an interested adult. This will only happen when teachers provide an informal and secure atmosphere.
- The school provides enough learning experiences and materials so that the children may explore their environment. Since the children are ready to find out about the world, they ask questions and relate experiences, they do things, they discover, they try out things, and make their own decisions. They are supported by their teachers in all of these experiences.
- There are opportunities for children to mix and socialise freely with peers.
- Children are treated as individuals and thus their individual needs are taken care of. Their questions are always answered satisfactorily. They are not at any stage ridiculed.
- Children also learn to work in groups, and therefore teachers have prepared varied group activities so that children can learn to contribute to a joint outcome. Also, working in groups encourages peers to help others who may be having difficulty. The groups help teachers to identify group dynamics and leaders.

To sum up, when one enters an ideal preschool one should find happy children fully involved in their activities [with murmurs] and have difficulty in spotting the teacher, as she too should be fully engrossed working with a group in one corner of the classroom. This is an imaginative kind of a preschool!

Preschools in reality. Very few preschools fit this description, despite the KIE guidelines. This kind of preschool is the expectation, not the rule. The reality of the fact is that current preschool practice does not match this ideology. Instead of encouraging children to ask and answer questions, or attempting to interact with the children as much as possible, teachers spend a lot of time keeping children quiet and ridiculing them. This behaviour on the part of the teacher instills fear in the children and destroys their confidence. Most preschools in Kenya are run by teachers with firm ideas on discipline and behaviour. They have large enrolments, often with one class of up to forty children to a single teacher, and little or no equipment or learning materials. Children have no opportunities to discover and explore or even move around the room.

Children from different communities undergo different types of preparation to enter state primary schools. The highly commercialised, private preschools use traditional teaching methods of repetition, recitation, and memorisation, and lots of emphasis is placed on written tasks. Other private preschools with trained teachers are more flexible, with some effort toward play and activity-based methods. Other preschools are just providing a safe environment and nutritious food. In other words, they are simply baby-sitting services. Most of the community-based preschools with trained teachers using KIE guidelines are quite progressive in the sense that they provide a conducive learning atmosphere with a substantial amount of guided and free-choice activities. Teachers are approachable and teach for the purpose. Sometimes they use traditional methods and sometimes child-centred methods; overall, they are flexible teachers.

The primary school. Primary schools in Kenya have gone through many changes since independence. There was a significant change from the 7-4-2-3 structure (7 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education, 2 years of high school, 3 years of university education) to the 8-4-4 system (8 years of primary school, 4 years of secondary education, and 4 years of university education). The 8-4-4 curriculum, established in 1985, brought about great changes in the methods used in the teaching/learning process and in the assessment of children. More subjects were included in the curriculum content to cater to children who would continue on to secondary schools, as well as to those who would end their education at the primary level.

The 8-4-4 philosophy is to build self-reliant, patriotic, responsible individuals with critical thinking skills to serve the nation. Thus the subjects offered are both vocational and academic. The curriculum emphasizes active child participation in which children become partners in their learning and build upon their knowledge. The 8-4-4 curriculum encourages children to be independent. Teachers are expected to give children ways to find out things for themselves, to experiment, and to discover so that they act intelligently.

Teachers are the key to implementation of the curriculum. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are very important and determine what they do in the classroom. The 8-4-4 system came into existence "overnight" and most teachers were not prepared for it. Many are not convinced of the value of participation and active learning. Teachers consider themselves

to be knowledge transmitters through lectures and the use of chalkboards. They see children as passive receivers. In addition to inadequately prepared teachers, there are many other factors which have contributed to the ineffective implementation of the curriculum, for instance, the large class enrolments and the acute shortage of instructional materials and teaching aids.

Gaps between preschool and primary school. There are significant gaps between what happens in the preschool and what happens at the primary level on a number of dimensions. For example, in terms of curriculum, as set out by the Ministry of Education, the Standard 1 class has a total of thirteen subjects, as compared to six subjects in preschool. The preschool subjects are mathematics, language, environmental studies, physical education, music, and creative art, while in Standard 1 the subjects are English language, Kiswahili, science, CHC (combined (geography, history and civics), physical education, religious education, mathematics, music, mother tongue, and arts and crafts.

Another difference is in teacher attitudes and practices. It is difficult to find any degree of commitment or job satisfaction among primary school teachers, but there appears to be a substantial proportion of preschool teachers who are relatively committed to their job and derive some satisfaction in teaching and therefore they continue, in spite of the constraints. Primary teachers are not practising child-centred approaches. There have been very few changes in the classroom methodologies and learning processes, despite what the 8-4-4 curriculum advocates. Schools in Kenya are what John Holt (1994) described as "a place where children learn to be stupid". Children are afraid to make mistakes and they lack confidence to trust their own perceptions. In contrast to this are the progressive preschool graduates who are not afraid of making mistakes. They are responsive, spontaneous and quite confident in their answers.

Another dimension on which preschools and primary schools differ is in terms of the level of formality. Regardless of the particular type of preschool, all preschools have some element of informality in their approach. Most preschoolers spend some time in free play, engage in lots of storytelling and songs, and in activities like sand and water play. But in Standard 1, children are introduced to a lot of written work. They are expected to sit still in their seats and be very quiet. The authoritative attitude of the teacher puts children off balance and creates a gap between what children have gone through and what is expected of them. The two levels of learning are not only dissimilar, but they are also drastically inadequate, so that the gap created makes children coil into a shell or become unmanageable. This gap may be better illustrated by looking at the condition of the process, methods, and the curriculum used in preschools and in primary schools.

The major features in the preschool are free movement, a friendly teacher approach, and a positive attitude. There is also some flexibility from subject to subject. In some cases, one would find thematic learning. Individual needs are met because the teacher-student ratio is low. On the opposite end of the spectrum, in the primary schools, the teacher possesses an authoritative attitude, follows a subject-oriented teaching approach, and practices the rote learning methods already described. These methods may not only impair learning capabilities, but may also close the door of learning abilities in many children altogether.

The discrepancies between what children are expected to learn and know in preschool and in primary school result in either of the following scenarios: 1) inappropriate preschools and inappropriate primary schools, or 2) appropriate preschools and inappropriate primary schools. The fact is that strictly formal preschools prepare children to fit into the primary schools, which themselves are termed as inappropriate (because of the unpleasant classroom conditions, gloomy bare walls, and teacher-centred approaches, where teachers are spending much of the time rushing to cover the syllabus and complaining of the overloaded curriculum rather than finding ways of making learning interesting and meaningful). On the other hand, the good, appropriate preschools with bright classrooms and lots of learning materials where child-centred approaches are practiced do not necessarily prepare children for entrance into the primary school system.

What needs to be done. There is an urgent need to bridge the gap so that the good intentions of both the preschool and the primary school curriculum can produce the happy, reliant, and intelligent citizens needed to build the Kenyan Nation. There must be a conscious effort by the schools at both levels to recognise the gaps, and to be aware of some of the discrepancies between preschool and primary school that create undue stress on children. Some of the suggestions include:

- Orientation visits of the pre-primary (transit) class to the Standard 1 class and a tour of the whole school.
- Child-to-Child programmes in which senior children can come to the preschools and help preschool children in their activities, and then introduce them to the primary school.
- Efforts can be made to educate the masses on current education attitudes, e.g., participatory methods. The prevailing belief in Kenya is that learning only takes place in a classroom when learners are seated in rows facing a blackboard and instructed by teachers. The few teachers who practice child-centred methods are pressured by parents to change.

- Teacher training institutions should keep up to current thinking in education and instill in teachers new beliefs so that these new ideas can become integrated into the field. This means the teacher trainers themselves should have faith in emerging methodologies and keep up to date not only with methodologies, but with learning processes, material development, team working spirit, etc.
- Improve the attitudes of teachers so that they will stop groaning and complaining about overloaded curriculum and other things. Instead, teachers should be encouraged to find the ways and means to improve practice and obtain good results. Teacher training institutions should also encourage the use of the English language. A good example of the use of the English language in schools is our close neighbour Uganda. Children there are fluent and confident in speaking English from preschool on. A study showed that in Uganda the English language fluency helped students' achievement in both language and mathematics. Another good example in Uganda is the Minds Across Project (1988) where children were able to produce their own literature from their creative writing. In addition, training institutions should train teachers in the thematic or project learning system.
- The KIE should revise the primary school curriculum, with an aim toward integrating topics in several subject areas, for example 'water', which is repeated in practically all subjects: science, CHC (geography, history and civics), language, mathematics, etc. When a topic is introduced, it should be linked to all the other subjects. This will reduce time and thus ease the burden on the teacher.
- A preschool curriculum should be developed with specific objectives, activities, and methods to help teachers interpret the curriculum better. The caliber of teachers is such that their understanding level is quite low. Most of them are primary school dropouts or Form IV failures. More preschool teacher training facilities should be established.
- The government needs to introduce a policy that provides a reasonable salary scheme for preschool teachers.
- Primary schools should establish a system where the Standard 1 school teachers work with the transit teachers of the preschool. At present the transit teachers are preparing children for Standard 1 interviews by drilling them to prepare for the test for entrance to primary school.

From Ethiopia to Indonesia

Through attendance at a meeting (The International Technical Consultation on the Early Learning Experiences of Children 0–6) sponsored by UNESCO in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November of 1994, a researcher was given the tools to examine the issues surrounding transition present in her home country (Indonesia), to identify areas of need, and, finally, to offer specific practices which could be implemented in Indonesia in order to provide bridging supports to children moving from preschool into primary school.

■ A Souvenir From Ethiopia: Bridging Preschool and Primary Education in Indonesia

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Based on research findings and observations, sociologists have come to the conclusion that schools, especially formal schools, have directed children's focus away from their parents and their local environment. It has been shown that what children learn in school is quite different from what they learn in their immediate environment, especially what is learned from their parents and friends. As a result, many parents from certain social groups consider school a negative impact on their children's education and do not allow them to attend.

On the other hand, many parents who do send their children to primary school raise such questions as: Why is subject matter so heavily emphasized? How come my children no longer like going to school after they start learning at primary education? Why could they learn by playing in preschool, and now, after they are in primary education, there are so many subjects to be learned?

These grievances indicate that there are significant discrepancies between preschool and primary education. The following are some of the noted differences in learning approaches between preschool and elementary education.

- The learning principle implemented in preschool is that of learning by playing, as well as playing while learning. Meanwhile in primary education, there is no distinct principle. However, it might be appropriate to label the primary education principle as "learning is hard," but even that would be arguable.
- "Subject matter" is a term which is not applicable for preschool. At this level children learn according to their own developmental stages. In the primary school, however, children are forced to become familiar with things like times tables when they are in their first year.
- The integrative approach is mostly applied in preschool, while a subject-based approach is used in primary education.

While each of these approaches has its own merits, it is necessary to provide some continuity between them. Since preschool children are likely to continue on to primary school, they should be given time to adjust to the new environment, as well as to new methods of learning. The first year of primary school is really very difficult for new students, especially

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those who are only six or seven years old, many of whom are in different stages of development. If the representative education coordinators (especially teachers) do not tackle this issue carefully, it might result in negative consequences, such as a child being reluctant to go to school, or worse, it might cause a setback in the child's developmental progress. If children are moved abruptly from an enjoyable learning environment into a totally different environment which requires them to memorize, to calculate, and to read and write in order to fulfill a predetermined and rigid set of expectations, the effects on the children can be disastrous. For some children these fast changes are certainly a heavy burden.

These two problems (i.e., formal education, which alienates children from their environment, and the enormous differences between preschool and primary education) have become an issue of great concern in years I and II of primary education. Thus, there should be some way of bridging these gaps if we really want a kind of "earthly" education, that is, an education that will be useful in solving the social, economic, and cultural problems of a nation, and not an "ivory tower". Having come to this realization, we should also be aware that children's education should be adjusted to their needs, conditions, and potentialities, as well as to the needs of the respective society.

The bridge. I was lucky to have had the chance to attend the meeting conducted by UNESCO in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November of 1994. The purpose of the meeting, the International Technical Consultation on the Early Learning Experiences of Children 0–6, was to look for alternatives in the teaching-learning process which could bridge formal education at the primary level and prior education, namely preschool education. The meeting was actually the continuation of a research and development activity which had been conducted by five countries: India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Ethiopia, and Egypt. The meeting's aim was to make participants aware of the importance of educational activities that bridge formal and any previous education, either those activities taking place in the preschool or those taking place in the home.

From my experience, it seems that in order to build the bridge in Indonesia, some adjustments need to be made in the Indonesia educational system, not at the preschool level but at year I primary level and, if possible, year II. Since the existing preschools are not designed to prepare learners entering the primary school, and since preschools are not mandatory (less than 50% of children attend), if changes were made at the preschool level, only a few children would benefit.

The Addis Ababa meeting provided many suggestions on building bridges between preschool and primary school, which, in my opinion, would not be difficult to implement in Indonesia. The suggestions are:

A special training for teachers of Years I and II primary education. This training would be aimed at building an awareness of the importance of taking care of children who newly enter primary education, while at the same time increasing teacher ability to apply different methods in the teaching-learning process. Obviously, the training should be very specific and in accordance with the needs of year I and II primary education teachers.

The child's mother tongue should be the language of instruction in years I and II. Using their first language will clearly facilitate children's learning comprehension, as well as provide them with a connection to their home environment. These implications certainly have a broad meaning for a country such as Indonesia. It should be understood that more than 50% of children in years I and II use the Indonesian language in the classroom, which, for them, is a foreign language. Theoretically, children should begin to read and write by using a familiar language, which in this case, is their first language. However, the national curriculum states that teachers of years I and II should provide instruction in the Indonesian language. One of the methods in early reading and writing applied by most teachers and most student textbooks asks for a higher understanding of the language than many children possess. Consequently, through research, the conclusion has

been reached that there are a lot of children who have not been able to learn to read and write with the appropriate tools. Thus it is necessary to build a bridge.

Individual services need to be provided for children in years I and II. This is important because upon entering school each child has his or her own specific abilities, and many of these differ from one child to the next. There could be many children who are already fluent in reading and writing and other children who are not familiar with any letters at all. These two groups of children study together in the same class, yet it does not make sense for them to use the same materials. There are more instances when this kind of discrepancy might arise in the classroom, such as with differences in language, arithmetic, and physical ability. It would be appropriate to include a program in the teacher training which addresses these individual differences.

There is a need to lessen the teaching burden (load) of teachers in primary education, years I and II. This would allow teachers to concentrate more fully on the teaching of early reading, writing, and arithmetic. Additionally, teachers also need to acquire teaching skills in areas such as music, art, and sports.

Year I teachers should be familiar with the students' educational backgrounds and abilities prior to entering primary school. This information is absolutely necessary for teachers to better understand each student and his or her capabilities, and subsequently to provide appropriate activities according to individual ability. Examples of student reading ability would be a good way to put this important information to use. This could be organized by the school in several ways. For example, reports could be written up on the reading abilities of year I primary students who have attended preschool, allowing primary teachers to adjust the reading curriculum to individual student levels. Following this, preschool teachers would need to write reports with the needs of year I primary teachers in mind. For learners who come from an environment other than preschool, interviews could be conducted with year I teachers and parents, either in the home or in school.

Teaching/learning tools need to be provided which can accommodate individual needs and conditions. If it is discovered that children are keen on playing with leaves, stones, seeds, or bamboo, teachers should use these materials in the teaching/learning process. It would also be beneficial if teachers introduced local dances, games, musical instruments, and traditional celebrations into the process of learning. This will help children to feel closer to their home environments and will help prevent alienation from parents and society.

There is a need to build harmonious relationships between teachers and parents. There should be at least three meetings per year between teachers and parents. Parents should also be asked to participate in educating their children at home. Because of the large number of students in one classroom, it is impossible for teachers to provide appropriate attention to each child; therefore parental involvement is essential. Keeping in mind that learning to read and building vocabulary are ongoing processes needing consistent reinforcement, teachers should involve parents by asking them to read books brought home from school by their children. Moreover, parents can teach children by pointing out things from the world around them, like a cat giving birth, a hen laying an egg, a trip to the market, etc., all which provide learning experiences outside the classroom. This could certainly be done at home, without any cost to the parent.

New Zealand

For many years now, children have been entering the school system in New Zealand at age five. They do so, one at a time, as they become five years of age (rather than in groups at a specific time). In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach to children's transitions from preschool into elementary school, Margery Renwick examines the differing perceptions and expectations of the children entering the school system, of their parents, and of their teachers. The results indicate there are many dimensions to the issue of transition, the process of having children enter on their date of birth cannot be evaluated on its own.

■ New Zealand: To School at Five—The Transition from Home or Pre-school to School.

Margery Renwick. Wellington: The New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1984.

To understand and document the process of starting school, a research project was begun in 1977. (At the time of the study, about 85% of all four-year-olds and about 50% of all three-year-olds attended some kind of preschool in New Zealand.) First, parents, preschool teachers, and new-entrant teachers were interviewed, and a small group of parents was asked to keep diaries of their children's experiences on entering school. From the information gathered, key issues were isolated and questionnaires prepared which were administered to a national sample of 300 teachers of new entrants, to 300 preschool teachers and supervisors (from three different kinds of preschool experiences), and to 300 parents. An extraordinarily high return (more than 90%) was obtained in all three categories.

The study was comprised of the following areas:

- children's expectations of school, school readiness for children, including the profile of a school beginner and a description of the school experience for the child;
- school entry from the standpoint of parents, cover-

ing such issues as whether or not parents should stay in the school during the first day, the relevance of sharing information about children with the teacher, parental attitudes, and participation by parents in the school through parent-helper schemes.

- an examination of the links between preschool and primary school, looking at the liaison between the two, at pre-entry visits, at how new-entrant teachers look at preschools, and at the advantages and disadvantages of children attending preschool.
- administrative issues are discussed and include the administrative division between preschools and schools, the age of entry into school, and whether entry should be individual or in groups.

The study included some of the following observations:

Children's expectations. Children expect to learn to read (among other things). They expect to have a loving teacher, but they also recognize that they need to work hard and be good all the time or they will be disciplined.

School readiness. There is a wide variation in opinions on the subject of school readiness among teachers and among parents. Some of them believe no such thing as school readiness exists. Others, who believe it is possible to isolate characteristics indicating a child is ready to enter school, refer to the following:

- *Social maturity.* The child makes friends easily and is able to cooperate with others, he or she is secure, confident, and independent with respect to activities (e.g., is able to go to the toilet alone).
- *Language development.* The child speaks confidently, possesses a good vocabulary, has had exposure to books, and exhibits pre-reading skills and a desire to read.
- *Behaviour and discipline.* The child accepts and respects authority, is obedient, and can sit still and listen.
- *Health.* The child is in good health and has also acquired certain physical skills. He or she also has the ability to cope with personal hygiene.
- *Desire to learn.* The child is curious.
- *Specific skills.* The child can use equipment (such as scissors or a pencil), count, recognize letters, know his or her address, and can write own name.

Pervading many of the comments made about school readiness is the need for a child to have a positive attitude toward school. This was linked with having at least one teacher with a sense of humour.

The school experience. In the opinion of the parents, the single most important factor in making a child feel enthusiastic about school is the personality of the teacher, particularly her ability to make the new child feel he or she is welcome. . . . It is equally clear that if a child has problems, they are likely to be caused either by difficulties in coping with other children, in settling in, in a social sense, or by difficulties in adjusting to the demands and restraints of school organization, routine, and discipline." (Renwick 1984, 19)

The presentation of the classroom and classroom activities can also affect a child's adjustment. Children sometimes have difficulties in accepting and conforming to the demands of classroom routine and organization. This may reflect anxiety about not knowing what is expected of them. Many teachers place great stress on children being disciplined, obedient, and accepting of the teacher's authority.

The relationship between teachers and parents. "The question of whether or not a mother should stay in the classroom on a child's first day illustrates the tension that can occur between mother and teacher when it comes to what many see as the 'handing over' of the child to the school." (Renwick 1984, 29) Most teachers say the adjustment is better if the mother does not stay. Teachers feel that parental presence simply represents a mother's exaggerated concern and unwillingness to let go; few recognize that parents may want to share this experience with their child, much as they have shared other experiences.

The impact of parents staying on the first day is probably less important than such things as: how well the child already knows the teacher, whether or not the parents have given the child the impression that they like and trust the teacher, whether or not there are plenty of interesting and absorbing things for the new child to do, whether or not the child knows other children in the classroom, and whether the class is small or large. (Renwick 1984, 33)

The sharing of information about children when they start school is important, but it should be done in a way that does not lead to labeling of the children and with the realization that information at this age is quickly out of date because children change so fast. Information about a child's health, including disabilities, is particularly important.

Parental involvement in the school has also proven to be successful. "Parents who are happy with their relationship with the school usually give as their main reason that the school is always welcoming." (Renwick 1984, 42)

Preschool/School partnership. "Although many teachers in all sections of early childhood education are conscious of the need for preschool/school liaison, such liaisons frequently depend on the personal qualities and enthusiasm of individual teachers." (Renwick 1984, 55) Preschool teachers often feel that primary school teachers do not really take preschool education seriously. It was found that regular meetings, or even occasional meetings, were by no means common. However, meetings may be less important than other forms of liaison, such as visits of preschool staff and children to the school as part of a policy to introduce preschool children to school.

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Age and process of admission to primary school. Most parents (80%), preschool teachers, and new-entry teachers felt that age five was the most appropriate age for entrance into school, although various individuals thought that there should be some flexibility in the age of entrance. Individual admission on a child's fifth birthday is generally taken for granted and accepted as a system which is both reasonable and workable; however, approximately half of all new-entry teachers favoured group admission as compared with about 30% of parents and preschool teachers. Those arguing for continuous and individual admission stressed that this system helped assure individual attention for new children and improved the chances of getting to know individual parents. Those favouring group admission argued mainly that classroom organization and management were easier to maintain. An alternative to individual admission that might have similar advantages would be admission of small groups of four to six children whose birthdays are close together, taking place perhaps once a month.

The current system of entry into school grew historically because many schools were in small rural towns and had only one or two teachers, and children entering school individually made it less disruptive for the other children. In small towns, the transition is more natural because the teachers tend to know the children before they arrive, the communication with parents is more informal, and the schools are less threatening. With the growth of large urban schools, the situation changes. A question was raised about whether transition is really mainly an urban problem.

Remedial Bridging Programs: Addressing Deficits in Children

Among countries which have already instituted bridging programs, a range of approaches have been taken. The following examples illustrate the ways these programs have been designed, adopted, and implemented to facilitate the transition process while taking a basically remedial approach.

Philippines

In the Philippines they have been experimenting with ways to prepare children for primary school through the integration of early childhood education into the existing school system. The ECD program that has evolved illustrates the potential for moving early childhood teaching methods into the first grade of schooling, and for helping children adjust to and perform better upon entry into primary school. It also demonstrates some of the difficulties in trying to introduce ECD into elementary education, particularly when first grade classes are large, when teachers have not been properly oriented, and when there is an overwhelming tradition of formalized instruction.

■ Preparing Children for School in the Philippines

based on two documents provided by the Department of Education and Sports (DECS), titled "The Summer School Program" and "Integration of Early Childhood Experiences in Grade I", a document prepared by Dr. L. Luis-Santos, Director III of the Bureau of Elementary Education of the DECS, titled "DECS ECCD Program", and from conversations with Fevy de los Angeles Bautista

Recognizing the need for and importance of preschool education, the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) in 1971 issued a policy document encouraging the school division to establish public preschool classes whenever possible. Since that time, public preschools have been provided, adding to the many private preschools already in existence.

In January 1995, a survey was conducted to assess the preschools implemented by DECS. One of the conclusions of the survey was that the government cannot afford to provide preschools in all parts of the country. Thus, in March 1995 DECS issued the following statement on early childhood education which affirms the importance of preschool but states that preschools should be developed by the community to provide early childhood development experiences for five-year-old children before they enter grade one.

> To provide children ... the benefits of preschool education, the concept of preschool as a structured system must give way to a system which is commu-

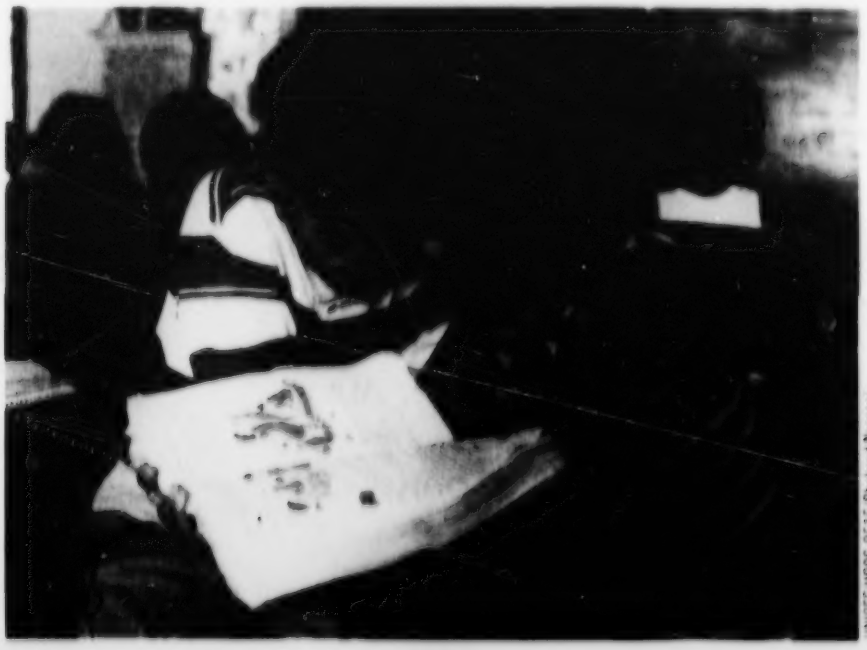
nity based. A community-based preschool will be an alternative technology that will be set up in the disadvantaged areas to give early childhood development experiences to five-year-old children before they go to grade one. It is a community-based non-profit school which will be established through a collaborative partnership of DECS, NGOs, Local Government Units (LGUs) and agents.

In addition to this movement toward locally-sponsored preschools, DECS has put considerable emphasis on the issue of school readiness, exploring different methods of better preparing children for school, and then keeping them in school. A study reported on in Heaver and Hunt (1995) brought to light some disheartening statistics regarding the effectiveness of primary education in the Philippines. A high dropout rate was found to be prevalent in the first and second grades, accounting for 60% of total primary school dropouts. In addition, national achievement tests indicated performance in the earlier grades at below 50% of the norm. These findings resulted in concerns about such issues as quality of education, dropout rates, and school readiness. A World Bank study, which showed that children from poor areas who do not attend preschool have an 18% drop-out rate, while the rate for those who do attend preschool is 12%, prompted the Bureau of Elementary Education (within DECS) to explore and implement programs that would provide preschool education to all children, and assist them in making the transition from home to school.

Prior to 1995, Filipino children entered the primary school at age seven. A majority of these children entered school without having had the opportunity to go to preschools. Recognizing that many children enter school at a definite disadvantage, the Government of the Philippines, with assistance from UNICEF, experimented in 1991 with a six-week summer preschool program designed to improve socialization and "readiness" skills for children six-and-a-half to seven years of age. Although the results of the Summer Preschool Program were moderately positive, budget constraints prevented continuation and expansion of the program. As a result, it was decided to incorporate early childhood experiences into the curriculum of grade one. The experiences and outcomes of these two programs follow.

The Summer Preschool Program. This experimental program, carried out in seven schools in each of three regions of the country, was explicitly intended to help bridge the gap between home and school by providing children with interesting and motivating activities in an enriching environment. In all, 583 children from low-income municipalities participated in the six-week, full-day program. Teachers were oriented to a special early childhood program (Learning Competencies for Preschoolers) and were provided with instructional materials (manipulative toys, blocks, activity sheets, poems, jingles, rhymes, and songs).

To evaluate the results of the program, readiness tests in Filipino, Mathematics, and Mental Ability were administered to children who had participated in the summer school program and to a comparative group of children who had not participated in the program and who had no preschool background. When mean scores for the two groups were compared using t-tests, a significant difference was found for all three tests, favoring the preschoolers. The significance level



UNICEF HQ96-0515 Shehzad Noorani

was highest for mathematics. When the results were disaggregated by region, significant results were found for two regions, but not a third.

Overall, however, this six-week program met with mixed success. On the positive side, teachers who received the children after this experience were enthusiastic about the children's readiness for school. And in a follow-up study, the dropout rate for children who had been in the summer preschool was 1%, compared to the 15% for those children without the summer class. The drawbacks included the fact that teachers were not compensated for their extra work apart from their regular salaries, so they were dissatisfied, parents had vacation plans that were interrupted by the schedule, and it was too hot.

Because of the positive benefits, DECS wanted to continue to provide the readiness activity, but not during the summer. They then experimented with the integration of ECD into grade one.

Early Childhood Experiences for Grade One. Beginning in the 1992–93 school year, an experiment was carried out in which the curriculum of the summer preschool program was moved into the first four weeks of the school year. The experiment was implemented in sixty-six classes in six regions of the country. Feedback from the teachers suggested that the curriculum was useful and the activities challenging, interesting, and enjoyable for the children. These encouraging results led to extension of the program to eight weeks in 1993–94, and to implementation in a larger number of classes and areas. DECS Central Office initiated training for teachers of public school kindergartens (referred to as "school-based ECD") in preparation for the opening of 1,428 classes in October 1993.

An evaluation of the expanded program indicated that parents were supportive, that the materials were helpful, and that the curriculum helped to better prepare children for their grade one work.

During the 1994–95 school year, the program was expanded further to include 30,375 pupils in fifteen regions, with a total of 675 grade one classes participating. In addition, a two-week trainers' training course was conducted in November 1994 with the regional and division supervisors as participants. There are now forty-eight supervisors who have conducted one-week or weekend training programs for the teachers in their divisions.

In 1995, Early Childhood Experiences for grade one was institutionalized at the same time as the official age for entry into primary school was dropped to six years of age. All grade one teachers were requested to implement the eight-week curriculum and gradually move to the regular grade one curriculum. Monitoring of the institutionalization of the Early Childhood Experiences conducted in 176 classes in twenty-two divisions during June and July of 1995 indicated the following:

- Most teachers had undergone a training program of one to three days, but the length of the training was thought by many to be too short.
- The curriculum guide was generally thought to be helpful and age-appropriate but brought with it extra work, and the teaching aids were sometimes inadequate.
- Most teachers followed the suggested schedule of activities.
- Some teachers were apprehensive that the eight-week curriculum would infringe on their budget of time to work on grade one curriculum.
- Some teachers did not implement the eight-week curriculum because they thought their students were ready for grade one work, they had not been given an orientation, they were worried about covering the grade one materials, or the classes were too large.

One of the concerns which has surfaced in regard to the curriculum is that it is too close to formal elementary school approaches.

Comment. The model has evolved. There is now an eight-week curriculum (six weeks of preschool plus two weeks of transition) that is introduced during the initial months of grade one. The program has been implemented in fifteen regions covering fifty-two divisions. With the lowering of the entrance age to six years beginning 1995–1996, the program is relevant and necessary, especially since preschool education is not yet available to all children at age four and five. The eight-week preschool curriculum helps to ease the transition into the formal and structured grade one classroom.

South Africa

In South Africa they have experimented with a number of bridging programmes in order to make the transition from home to school less abrupt and to help prepare children for primary school. The majority of the programmes, while claiming that the schools 'bend to the needs of the children rather than requiring the child to meet the needs of the system,' in practice, place emphasis on providing young children with skills that will help them survive in the primary school.

■ Department of Education and Training (DET) Bridging Period Programme (BPP)

Judith L. Evans

The Department of Education and Training's Bridging Period Programme has been chosen for review because it is one of the most extensive programmes, and it represents a unique approach to addressing the problem of repetition and dropout.

The BPP is structured so that it effectively provides a year (or two years) of pre-primary education for those children who require it. When children enter school they receive a three-week orientation programme. Those who are ready (group one) are moved

to the first year of primary school (known as SSA) after the initial three-week period. The other children continue in the orientation class. These children are then tested twelve weeks later, at the completion of the Bridging Module. Again those who are ready (group two) are moved to SSA and the others (group three) continue in an extended school readiness programme for the remainder of the year. During the second year, group three begins the process over again. These children are moved into SSA when they are ready.

By 1988, the BPP had been successfully introduced into primary schools which have three or more SSA classes, and since then it has been phased in at smaller public schools. In 1992, BPP was introduced into state-aided or farm schools as well. This resulted in a total of 1 808 bridging classes being provided in 1 230 schools. In 1992, in greater Cape Town itself, there were some forty bridging classes, and in Johannesburg there were 136. (Taylor 1992: 14)

According to Department of Education and Training reports (as summarized in Taylor 1989: 33), the programme reduced the failure rate from 21% to 3% in SSA. Taylor reports that this finding was corroborated by an independent research study undertaken in Soweto, where it was found that children with no preschool training were almost twice as likely to repeat a grade at least once during the first three years of school, when compared to those who had attended a pre-basic course. From this Taylor concludes that "in the South African context, preschool programmes carried out within the strongly authoritarian instrumental framework of the Department of Education and Training do mediate the school experiences of African children." (1989: 33)

Following the example of DET, the self-governing states also began to be involved in pre-primary education (e.g., in Ciskei). Some established pre-primary schools at a very high cost, others added a pre-primary class to primary schools, and others subsidized private initiatives. "By 1987 over 31 000 children in six African education departments were enrolled in state-subsidized or state-initiated pre-primary programmes." (1989: 34)

There are two ways to look at the BPP programme. It can be seen as a way for the Department of Education and Training to offer a pre-primary class, even though this is not within their mandate. For some children it can be a two-year programme, for others it can be one year, and for those who are ready, it can be a very temporary step before movement almost directly into primary school. Another way to look at BPP is that it allows for the reality that children are likely to repeat first grade. It provides a mechanism whereby children can be seen to be making progress and not simply repeating the first year of primary school. In either case, what is evident from the BPP programme is that the Department of Education and Training recognised the importance of a pre-primary experience, and that they tried to find ways to accommodate a preschool experience into the reality of their structural constraints.

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Creating a Variety of Approaches to Support Linkages

Guyana

This case study provides an interesting example of how the research process and its results can be used to make a difference in the way transitions are handled for children. The strategy used was to bring together the teachers from the pre-primary and primary classes and have them work together to come to some common understanding of what is required of children in the different settings and determine how the teachers in both settings can make the transition smoother for children.

■ Transition from Nursery School to Grade One in Guyana

based on studies by Janis Blakey, University of Alberta, and Norma Agnes Barchoo, Assistant Chief Education Officer, Guyana

Since 1976, children in Guyana have had a constitutional right to free education beginning at the nursery school level. Nursery education, which is divided into two levels, covers children from three years, nine months to five years, nine months. A very high percentage of children in Guyana attend nursery school. The transition from nursery school to primary school has been a concern in Guyana since at least the mid-1980s, prompting research on this transition period.

In 1985, a research project was organized to identify the different perspectives that parents, nursery school teachers, and grade one (Prep A) teachers had on the problem of transition, examining goals and expectations, as well as looking at the importance assigned to specific features of early education, such as play, open structures, and child-directed learning (Blakely 1986). The project also sought suggestions from the teachers about how to help with the transition. The results of the study served as a basis for reflection in future workshops which brought together both nursery and Prep A teachers in a search for common ground on which to facilitate transition.

At the time the research was undertaken, the nursery school curriculum was directed toward the integral development of young children in order to help them to develop to their full potential. It was characterized by a flexible approach which took children at their existing levels of development. By way of contrast, primary schools were not flexible, placing heavy emphasis on cognitive development, on tests, and on completing the syllabus. In the opinion of the researchers,

> It is evident that teachers of Prep A classes need to understand the interaction of children coming from the nursery schools. In the primary school, many teachers prefer the children who would sit still and await instructions; any deviation is deemed undisciplined and difficult to cope with. This is clearly the

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> teacher's preference for the kind of child he wants in the classroom, but because of the structure of the nursery programme and the school environment, these children have grown accustomed to another type of behaviour that is acceptable in that [preschool] setting. (Baichoo 1986)

Nursery and primary school teachers were found to have similar goals for children, such as the acquisition of basic skills, the promotion of cognitive development, the extension of learning to beyond the classroom, and socialization for respect and national consciousness. But when the expectations of the two groups were compared, primary teachers were found to be more oriented toward preparation in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Both groups felt that cooperation with parents and the children's readiness for school were central problems to be addressed.

The research also showed, as might be expected, that nursery school teachers regarded play as very important. Prep A teachers were less enthusiastic about play but thought that it was somewhat important, while parents did not rank play as important at all, even in nursery school. All of the groups considered an open structure for learning important. However, the educators were clearly more in favour of this approach than the parents. Interestingly, parents were more supportive of an open learning structure for grade one than they were for nursery school. Apparently, this reflected a parental desire to ensure that their children had mastered the basic skills thought necessary to read and write before entering primary school. Consistent with the above, parents were more supportive of a highly structured program of teacher-directed learning than were educators. The research also included interviews with children who, not surprisingly, "...liked teachers who played with them, taught them songs, told stories and did not beat kids." (Blakey 1986, 11)

A workshop was organized which brought together nursery and primary school teachers. Working in pairs made up of one nursery teacher and one primary teacher from the same geographical area, teachers were asked to pose solutions for bridging gaps between their respective levels of education. Their solutions included: visiting homes, working with children in smaller groups, establishing interest corners and team teaching when the number of children permits.

Reflecting on the research results and the suggestions of the paired teachers, the group reached a number of areas of agreement and generated a list of beliefs that all teachers felt were important:

- Children should be allowed to express themselves freely and clearly in written and oral form.
- Young children should develop a sense of responsibility.
- Young children should have self-confidence and a healthy self-concept.
- Young children should be given an opportunity to play meaningfully because, through play, children sometimes learn what adults cannot teach them.
- Second year children in nursery should be exposed to part of the Prep A programme.
- Pupils should be promoted according to ability and performance and not by age only.
- Children need individual attention from teachers, as well as from parents.
- Children have a right to ask questions and to explore things in the environment.
- Interaction between teachers and children, parents and children, and parents and teachers will result in a satisfying learning experience.
- Parents, as well as teachers, should provide materials to create an exciting classroom.
- Children learn from each other.

These statements were used as a basis for reflection by the teachers on how the curriculum and methods could be adjusted to be more in line with these beliefs. The teachers suggested further that:

- Prep A must have some semblance of the nursery for the first term and must be more conducive to learning (by including interest corners, for instance).
- Nursery and primary teachers should meet periodically.
- There should be a continuity of training values.
- The nursery teachers should meet the Prep A teachers half-way when considering academic achievements and prepare the children for the Prep A experience. For example, children should know how to write and understand some mathematical concepts, and they should be less mobile in the classroom.
- A report from nursery schools should be available to Prep A teachers.

Against this background, a recent report by Guyana to UNESCO (1996) indicated that activities intended to facilitate transitions were taking place in Guyana. In the ten administrative regions and in the capital Georgetown, nursery and primary schools are involved in activities to facilitate the transition from nursery to primary school and to define the underlying principles of early childhood education. These exercises include:

- regular workshops for nursery teachers;
- visits by second-year pupils of nursery schools to primary schools during the final term of the academic year;
- the meeting of Prep A and nursery teachers at specified nursery workshops to discuss prerequisite skills and expectations for the Prep A entrants;
- visits by Prep A teachers to observe the second-year nursery pupils "at work";
- assistance to parents at Parent Action Committee

meetings to understand the Prep A programme;

- speakers to address parents about their roles and responsibilities for the psychological preparation of their children for entry to primary school at graduation ceremonies, prize-giving activities, and school-closing exercises;
- teachers of Preps A and B being encouraged to ensure that they provide a stimulating classroom environment which closely resembles the nursery school setting through the presence of manipulative toys, interest corners, basic charts, large, clear and colourful pictures, and the allied arts;
- meetings of clusters of schools and level committees to identify difficulties in classroom performance and to arrive at workable solutions, especially in the area of methodology.

Last, in order to ensure that the concept of early childhood education and the transition from nursery to primary level is more widely understood, three approaches have been planned:

- Workshops for teachers of Preps A and B, and orientation of head teachers of primary schools (workshop courses are to include: the infant school curriculum, related theories and principles, establishing the infant school environment, the creative arts and the young child, the integrated approach, the infant class time-table, transition from the nursery to the primary level, and the preparation for the new school term);
- As an outcome of the workshops for prep teachers, one hundred trained teachers will be selected to receive further coaching as Field Officers so that the implementation of the ECE at the primary level can be closely monitored;
- A public awareness programme is geared to help parents and the general public understand and appreciate their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the Early Childhood Education programme.

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South Africa

A programme developed in Bophuthatswana has attempted to address the issue of children's transitions by focusing on the readiness of the primary school for children as well as children's readiness for the primary school. The Bophuthatswana Education Department's Early Childhood Programme was designed to tackle the problem of repetition and drop-out (defined as a problem of children's transition into school) not by adding a bridging year, but by experimenting with upgrading the primary school itself and by developing a pre-primary programme for children 4–6 years of age.

■ The Bophuthatswana Primary Education Upgrading Programme (PEUP) and Pre-Primary Education.

Judith L. Evans

The Bophuthatswana Primary Education Upgrading Programme (PEUP) began in 1980. The basic notion was that if the quality of the primary school could be upgraded, then there would be less inefficiency and waste since children would more easily make the transition from home to school. The approach taken by Bophuthatswana is supported by research. In studies undertaken to examine the 'disadvantages' of the African child's home environment, children were observed and tested before entrance into school and after a few years in school. The results of the studies indicated that, while there may be some aspects of the early home environment which are not conducive to children being school-ready at six years, these aspects are few. (Kemp 1993, 2)

The researchers argue that the issue is not the child's lack of readiness for the school. They feel their data show that 'the causes of early school failure lie not in the *home life* of the children before school, but in the *actual school experience itself*.' (Kemp 1993, 2) They go on to argue for a radical restructuring of the early school curriculum. Curriculum reform was one part of the Bophuthatswana PEUP; it also addressed teacher training and parent-community involvement issues.

The PEUP project was initiated to facilitate the adoption of child-centred teaching approaches in pilot primary classrooms. The objectives of the effort were to improve the learning environment by, for example, encouraging the painting of classrooms, improving the supply of adequate water and toilet facilities at schools, motivating schools to overcome shortages in classroom accommodation, and introducing appropriate learning materials by drawing on community and particularly parent involvement in school matters.

In order to enter the project, schools had to demonstrate their commitment to the upgrading process. Schools were required to fulfill five conditions for entry into the programme. They had to commit themselves to the following standards: to have single sessions only; to limit their class sizes to fifty; to admit pupils only if they were five-and-a half years

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old on entry, to commit themselves to carrying out certain classroom improvements, such as constructing shelves, at their own expense; and, finally, to contribute on a rand-for-rand basis to the purchase of the project furniture. This cost was absorbed by parents.

Upgrading of the classrooms began with grade one in seven schools. The following year grade two was upgraded in the seven schools, and the upgrading continued year by year. In addition to the physical upgrading, in-service teacher training courses were provided at the seven schools. (By 1988, all 840 primary schools in Bophuthatswana were included.)

An important aspect of the programme was the elimination of end-of-the-year examinations up to and including Standard 3. Throughout these grade levels there is automatic promotion of students. Released from the constraints of formal testing and the consequent cramming, teachers are free to institute child-centred methods at the lower end of the primary school. Not surprisingly, as students entered Standard 4 (at the end of which there is an exam), there was a return to more didactic teaching.

In 1982, at much the same time as PEUP was being introduced, there was a departmental commitment to supporting an early intervention programme for 3-6 year olds, making early childhood education part of the education system. In many schools the pre-primary programme was implemented in conjunction with the PEUP.

The Bophuthatswana pre-primary programme is unusual in that it did not have school readiness as its major aim. Its goal is to ensure that 3-6 year olds acquire adequate life and school skills so that they will become responsible adults and community leaders. The focus is on all-around development: social, emotional, spiritual, physical and mental. Life skills include confidence, creativity, independence, logical thinking, curiosity, etc. School readiness skills involve gross and fine motor coordination, concentration, listening and language skills. The programme also has the stated aim of encouraging parental participation and involvement in the child's development and education. By 1994 the department had 532 preschool classes catering to some 32 000 children, predominantly in rural areas.

In terms of financing the programme, PEUP involves individuals and private institutions as well as government. The private/government partnership seems to have been an important element of this effort. While the government infrastructure provides the space for the programme, non-governmental agencies provide the curriculum and training expertise. The partnerships seem to have been effective.

Overall PEUP is considered a success story. There are a number of positive elements to the preschool model. First, it spreads the provision load and promotes parent involvement. Second, state support has led to good teacher/pupil ratios and a higher quality programme. Third, the focus on life skills preparation has been a positive feature. Taylor summarises the experience by stating, "it has infused primary education in Bophuthatswana with a new spirit and orientation." (Taylor 1989, 38) The value of such an infusion cannot be overlooked.

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Colombia

While not including an early childhood component, the Nueva Escuela from Colombia is illustrative of the way in which the structure, curriculum, and pedagogy of a primary school can be linked appropriately with community needs to make the school a more welcoming and supportive place for children, while at the same time stimulating their learning and achievement.

■ The New School Programme (Escuela Nueva): More and better primary education for children in rural areas.

Vicky Colbert, Clemencia Chiappe and Lauro Arboleda
UNICEF Colombia, 1990
Summary by Judith L. Evans

The Escuela Nueva was organized in 1975 in response to persistent problems in rural education in Columbia. The basic assumption behind the effort was that

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things had to be done differently if children were going to be educated in rural areas. The programme started with two fundamental assumptions. The first was that innovation at the level of the child requires creative changes in the training of teachers, in administrative structures, and in relations with the community. Accordingly, the programme was designed to offer an integral response to these assumptions through the development of four components: curricular, training, administrative, and community. It features concrete strategies for children, teachers, administrative agents, and the community.

Second, from the outset, it was essential to develop mechanisms that are replicable, decentralized, and viable in a technical, political, and financial sense. In other words, the design of the system had to include how to go to scale. In 1985 the programme was adopted as the national strategy to universalize primary education in rural Colombia.

Curriculum content. The curriculum promotes active and reflective learning, the ability to think, analyze, investigate, create, apply knowledge, and improve children's self-esteem. It incorporates a flexible promotion mechanism and seeks the development of cooperation, comradeship, solidarity, civic participation, and democratic attitudes.

The curriculum is socially relevant, inductive, and concrete. It also provides active learning experiences for children. The package includes study guides for children, a school library with basic reference material, activity or learning centres, and the organization of a school government. The study guides follow a methodology that promotes active learning, cognitive abilities, discussion, group decision-making, and the development of skills that can be applied within the environment, thus making the link between the school and the community.

The study guides also contain a sequence of objectives and activities to be developed at the pace of the student, thereby allowing for flexible promotion. The guides are adapted to the lifestyle of the rural child. Within the flexible promotion system, children may advance from one grade or level to another at their own pace. The system allows children to leave school temporarily to help their parents in agricultural activities, in case of illness, or any other valid reason, without jeopardizing their chance of returning to school and continuing their education. The concept of adapting to the child by incorporating flexible time is a highly important learning variable in this model.

Another important characteristic is that the study guides combine a core national curriculum with possibilities for regional and local adaptations made by the teachers during the training workshops.

The adoption of self-instructional guides comes in recognition of the need to facilitate the workload of those teachers who have to handle more than one grade at a time. The study guides are used by groups of two or three children to encourage group work processes.

Teacher training and follow-up. This component promotes in teachers a guiding and orienting role, as opposed to one involving the mere transmission of knowledge. It also encourages a positive attitude toward new ways of working in rural education, the acceptance of the teacher's role as a leader and dynamic force in the community, and it fosters a positive attitude toward the administrative agents and technical assistance.

Training and follow-up for teachers and administrative agents involves in-service training workshops. A series of four basic workshops, one for administrative agents and three for teachers, conducted over the course of one year, are essential to correctly implement the methodology. After each of the workshops there is an opportunity for teachers to meet once a month to exchange ideas, analyze problems, and discuss results.

Group discussion (sometimes in the teacher's own classroom) is used to promote positive attitudes toward the programme, and to provide teachers with information and strategies. This approach to teacher training maintains that if the learning model proposed for children is active, discovery-oriented, tied to the community, and has an emphasis on creativity and cooperation in group projects, the process of training teachers must have similar characteristics. This is why the training materials follow a similar methodological pattern and process as the children's study guides.

Administration. This component promotes a supportive rather than controlling role for administration. Administrative agents are required to integrate pedagogical practices into their administrative functions. As noted, one of the four workshops offered each year is for administrators. The workshop for administrative agents/supervisors has as its objectives: to develop the abilities of the staff to guide the application of the Escuela Nueva methodology; to develop the abilities of staff to follow up the implementation of the programme while working with teachers in the classroom; and to modify their traditional role in such a way that they become an immediate resource person for teachers in the learning process.

The Community. This component encourages the mobilization of parents and community to increase their involvement in school activities. Some of these activities include becoming familiar with the new educational approaches, helping to gather simple information on the community, improving the physical space and furnishing the classrooms, and helping to organize the library and/or the activity centres.

Specifically, the programme gives teachers the guidelines for the preparation of a community map, a family information register, a calendar of agricultural events, and various social and cultural monographs to increase the knowledge of the community. This is the

UNICEF 93-1663 Shams-uz-Zaman

first step toward a process of community development, and it is essential regardless of whether or not the teacher lives in the community.

In addition, the written materials used by the students include community content, thereby encouraging students to apply what they learn in their real life to their school life, and to promote activities that contribute to improvement of the overall community.

Evaluation. The impact of the programme is now becoming evident, particularly when children from Nueva Escuela are compared with children from the traditional system. Formative evaluations have been conducted at both the student and teacher level at different periods of time. For example, in tests given on socio-civic behaviour, mathematics for third grade, and Spanish for third and fourth grades, children of the Escuela Nueva scored considerably higher than those in traditional rural schools. An analysis of self-esteem showed that children enrolled in the Nueva Escuela programme have a higher level of self-esteem than children in other rural schools. The fact that the self-esteem of girls equalled that of boys is particularly important and demonstrates the equalizing effect of the participatory methodology. However, the growing demand for implementation of the programme and the positive reaction of teachers, administrative agents, and the community are the best indicators of success.

India

■ Innovative Approaches to Early Childhood Education

Maha Khullar and Shyam Menon, 1996
(reprinted, with editing, from the Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter, Number 80, July 1997.)

In the mid-eighties, *Bodh Shiksha Samiti* began as an approach to providing primary school education to children of the urban poor in the slums of Jaipur, Rajasthan. What began with a school in a single slum has, over the years, expanded to schools in seven slums.

Initially, Bodh created what they envisioned to be an ideal primary school. The school was designed, on the one hand, to reflect the aspirations of the slum dwellers and respect the dignity of children; and, on the other hand, to eschew certain existing practices, such as corporal punishment, which were prevalent both in the community and in other schools in the neighbourhood, as well as within the wider context of the city. This ideal school was visualised to implement a curriculum which would respond to the students' whole life—their material deprivation, emotional stress, and intellectual suppression. Thus, Bodh sought to evolve a model of primary education based on democratic principles and to provide children with a nurturing learning environment based on trust rather than on fear of teachers. This model also viewed parents and community members as active stakeholders, not only in the setting up of the school, but also in its day-to-day operations and curricular issues.

In time, younger siblings of the slum school chil-

dren tagged along with their older brothers and sisters, and the need for catering to the pre-school age group was recognised. This led to the inception of Bodh's preschool centres in 1993, first with a pilot grant funded by Aga Khan Foundation (AKF India), followed by full project funding from AKF, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and British DfID (ex-ODA).

Bodh's concern is as much social as it is educational. The organisation tacitly endorses a vision of social change which is community centred, community determined, and based on the principles of equality, human dignity and democratic functioning. Bodh solicits the collaboration of residents. The first priority for Bodh, therefore, is always to generate a sense of ownership for the programmes on the part of the community. Bodh schools are intended to provide fora for the communities to discover for themselves the value of the collective and to eventually work toward this vision.

Approaches, curriculum, and practice. The curricular and pedagogical approaches of Bodh essentially emerge out of the broad vision of social intervention mentioned above. Schools are set up to function in a democratic framework, and the spirit of democracy characterises the interactions among teachers, between teachers and functionaries, teachers and children, teachers and para-teachers (mother teachers and child teachers), teachers and community, and among the children themselves.

The approaches developed by Bodh over the years place great significance on community and parental involvement in the education of their children.

The curriculum and practice evolved and operationalised in the Bodh approach seek to make education interesting and activity-oriented, and thus they reject rote learning. There are no rigidly-defined classes, but only loosely constituted *samoohs* (groups) based roughly on age and ability. The system also allows for periodic regrouping on the basis of assessment of capabilities.

The pedagogy adopted in the preschool and early primary classes is largely play-centred and activity-oriented, and teaching is done in an integrated manner.

In the development of curriculum and material for the preschool programme, the teachers gain familiarity with the children's dialects, traditional stories, games, songs, and customs, and they use these as part of their pedagogical tools and activities. For example, traditional stories are recited and dramatised with puppets and pictures, and traditional songs are sung by teachers and children. In all of these the children's active participation is solicited. For example, children chorus the teachers in songs, teachers ask questions while telling stories or during puppet shows to which children respond, children take turns in reciting stories or singing songs, and games are played with much zest, noise, and the teachers participation.

This, however, brings us to a pertinent and related question: how does the Bodh philosophy translate into its curricular practice? Bodh's approach to curriculum and pedagogy seems to stem from a set of convictions and underlying assumptions. These are:

- a child is qualitatively different from an adult in the manner in which she/he knows, understands, and relates to the world;
- what the child learns at school is only part of the broader socialisation and learning he/she imbibes from home, neighbourhood, and the larger society;
- a child learns best through meaningful activities;
- learning takes place best when it goes through a process similar to the one that knowledge has evolved through; and
- there are considerable individual differences among children in style and pace of learning, even within similar age and ability clusters.

The pedagogy. We received the impression that the pedagogy adopted in the preschool and early primary classes was largely play-centred and activity-oriented. The teacher initiated an activity which normally lasted for half an hour or so. Learning of mathematics was not separated from that of language or drawing. Children were encouraged to learn independently through their own activities, play situations, and stories. In subsequent classes, however, subjects were demarcated to some extent.

Operations. Every Bodh teacher, in the slum schools as well as in other schools, visits the household of one child in her group on average every day. She shares her impressions of the child's progress, and gets to understand the parent's perceptions, which she records in the cumulative assessment record book of the child, which is prepared monthly. This home visiting process truly seems to work to build a real partnership between home and school through the child's progress.

The teachers, the mother, and (mostly adolescent) children who have been trained to be teachers, wherever present, provide structure to the typical preschool morning, which proceeds in a planned, sequential, though not rigidly fixed manner. All activities are planned for systematically at the centre level under the leadership of the teacher and mother teachers who maintain daily diaries, for which an hour is reserved every day. They record all that happened in the course of their work and make an assessment of what they were able or unable to achieve, giving reasons. The diaries then serve as the basis for teacher (peer) discussion groups. The depth of reflective thinking about what has happened and the planning for what will come next is impressive. Some mother teachers have become literate enough to write diaries on their own.

Coordinated environments. The preschool provides the children with an environment which is

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somewhat different from the children's homes. An attempt is made to connect the programme setting to children's familiar settings through the informal (*samooh*) structure of the programme. There are also opportunities to connect the community and the school through local women's groups which meet every day to, among other things, discuss their children's education, cleanliness, health and nutrition.

It is from these women's groups that the cadre of mother teachers has been successfully trained and employed in the preschools. Similarly, some children, especially adolescent girls, through association and training, have also been involved in the preschool programme as child teachers. Like mother teachers, they work as assistants to the preschool teachers, and now a salary is being considered for them.

Having involved the mothers in the child's preschool education has also created a channel of entry into the school for the children's family members, especially their mothers and older sisters. Through the preschool programme, interest and concern is aroused within families about the young child's process of development. This carries over as the children enter primary school.

At the present time, Bodh both operates its own schools and works with government schools. The link with government schools began when Bodh and AKF wanted to experiment with whether and to what degree their approach to teaching and learning could be transferred to government schools, where the circumstances are quite different.

Initially Bodh started with an 'adoption' programme (now called the extension programme) that began with dialogues with the government schools to introduce the Bodh philosophy and pedagogy to teachers in the schools. Bodh had support from the local Ministry of Education personnel to undertake training of teachers in ten government schools. They began with one or two classes per school, with a Bodh-trained teacher working alongside the government teachers. While there have been constant challenges, the approach is beginning to take hold.

Training. The effectiveness of Bodh's operations is the result of its training, which develops in the teachers the required competence, motivation and attitudes. To develop the desired skills requires an intense induction or training programme which aims not merely at developing in the participants a repertoire of knowledge and skills, but also in sowing in them the seeds of healthy scepticism about what has long been taken for granted about education, school, and children. They are trained for two months to assist the teacher. The training provides the women with an opportunity for debating and dialoguing on the various issues related to children, community, schooling, curriculum, pedagogy and so on.

The value of the initial training programme seems to be the emphasis on developing a world view, basic awareness, and a positive disposition regarding children, community, and schooling, and not so much on skills development. The orientation of the training programme is not didactic; the participants are encouraged to bring forth their own experiences and skills into the programme.

Most mothers who were trained as mother teachers were initially illiterate; many have since acquired literacy and numeracy skills at the *samooh*. But their other talents and skills, such as singing and the ability to relate to children, make them a valuable resource in the preschools.

The responses of children. Children in the Bodh classes were definitely confident and fearless in the manner in which they related to each other and the adults. In the primary schools, the difference in classroom climate between the Bodh classrooms and the non-Bodh classes was clear. In one of the schools we visited, the children of a non-Bodh class were more interested in what was happening in the neighbouring Bodh class than in their own; they were peeping into the Bodh class all the time. Presumably, they found the Bodh class much greater fun than their own.

Bodh pedagogy involves, at times, a lot of noise too, and this was not always taken to very kindly by the non-Bodh teachers in the adoption schools. Obviously there was a certain difference in perception between Bodh and non-Bodh teachers as to what should be considered 'good' classroom behaviour. The problem was less visible in schools where the Bodh approach has been more widely accepted by the school head and teachers.

The future. Currently Bodh has three programmes: its work with primary school children in slums, the preschool programmes in slum schools, and the extension programme with government schools. AKF is hoping to work with Bodh in the coming years to expand and strengthen Bodh as an institution, and to modify the slum schools to serve as local resource centres for further outreach.

Related Resources

The Transition from School to Home: A Socioeconomic Analysis of the Benefits of Educational Intervention with Families and Schools. *C. Bonte and J. Filp. 1996. International Journal of Educational Research 25: 175-183.*

To address the issue of transition, Project Transition from Home to School (PTHS) was created. Specifically, the goal of this project was to increase children's probability of developing their full human potential from the moment of birth onwards, and to increase their chances of success in the first years of primary school. The project was directed toward different adults who would influence the children during that time. To accomplish this, the project had four components:

- The Parents and Children component (Proyecto Padres e Hijos). This intervention focuses on groups of mothers of small children (birth to five years). The aim is to empower parents so that they can create more favourable conditions in the home and in the community for the development of the full potential of their children.
- The Educating Together component (Proyecto Educando Juntos). This project centres on the creation of collaborative relationships between parents, kindergarten teachers, and primary 1 and 2 teachers to bridge the gap between home, kindergarten, and primary school. It was expected that these collaborations would facilitate children's school learning and result in improved conditions for the cognitive and emotional development of children from kindergarten until the end of primary 2.
- The Teacher Development component (Proyecto Capacitacion del Magisterio). This intervention is directed toward kindergarten and primary 1 and 2 teachers. Its objective is to promote team work between kindergarten and primary school teachers and to prepare them for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The emphasis is on the production of written materials and on the contents that are culturally relevant to the life experiences of children from poor communities.
- The Cultural Transition from Home to School (Transicion Cultural del Hogar a la Escuela) component. This is a quantitative study of the socialization of children from low-income groups in the home and in the school.

All components were designed and developed within an action research framework. This means they were developed with broad strokes to begin with, and then were developed gradually and corrected according to the feedback received from the various participants. In addition, staff sought to be sensitive to conditions which facilitated or blocked implementation. This was particularly important since one of the purposes of the PTHS was to develop an intervention that could be adopted by both the public education system and NGOs. The article describes the four programmes and the anticipated cost effectiveness of the approach.

Since the project began recently, cost effectiveness estimates were made based on the results of similar projects, thus providing general approximations which can be corrected as data are gathered in the future. A review of studies conducted in Chile was carried out to establish the levels of development and school achievement of children from low-income groups at different ages. The second step was to review evaluations of programmes similar to those implemented in the PTHS, as well as to look at research reports concerning relationships between children's development

and family variables. The third step was to estimate possible gains of PTHS, based on the similarities between the projects of the reported studies and the PTHS.

Using a conservative approach in the estimation of three types of benefits (occupational status, educational cost savings, and new ideas and institutions), without including other benefits in efficiency and in educational equity also produced by the PTHS, it is estimated that this is a highly efficient investment. The estimates would suggest that the educational programmes which promote the participation of families in the education of their children both at home and at school and which promote teacher development and collaborative relationships between the home and the school, can produce results that benefit the family, the children, and society at large. Consequently, investments in these types of projects are justified from educational, social, and economic points of view.

Preescolar Na Casa: Teaching Parents To Teach Children. *Emilio Fernandez. 1994. In Alpha 94: Literacy and Cultural Development Strategies in Rural Areas, chapter 1.*

This chapter describes a school readiness program that has been implemented in rural Galicia (Spain) since 1977. Data from the region reveal that seventy percent of Galicia's population lives in rural areas, its economy remains primarily agricultural, its inhabitants earn less than the national average, it has the largest number of public assistance recipients, and there is a forty percent failure rate in the schools (higher in rural areas). This program aims to prepare parents to create a conducive educational environment in the home and to choose activities that support their children's development in all areas. The families of 2,658 children from birth to six years old, are currently involved in the program, which has twenty-two counselor teachers, four volunteers, nineteen aides, and six municipal councils. Meetings are held with parents and children every two weeks and include presentations of children's home learning activities, instructions for parents on home learning activities, planning for future activities and learning themes, and discussion of child rearing issues. Other program activities include a parent newsletter, radio programs for parents and children, a weekly half-hour television program for parents, resource materials concerning child rearing, and the publication of booklets for parents on various subjects. Program evaluation reveals that meetings have enhanced the self-esteem of parents, improved the quality of family life for participants, led to better use of local resources, and resulted in parents' active participation in their children's education. Additionally, children displayed improved communication skills, increased self-esteem, and independence.

Bridging the Gap Between Home and School: Improving Achievement in Primary School. *K. Sylva and I.S. Blatchford. 1996. UNESCO, Paris.*

This report presents results of case studies carried out in Ethiopia, Egypt, Jamaica, and Indonesia, which were intended to document what children had learned about themselves, their families, community, and environment during their first six years. By drawing on that knowledge and the experience gleaned from the study, work is being done to improve curricula and teaching methods; improvements, it is hoped, that will support rather than disrupt learning at the point of transition to school. After briefly presenting results from each of the studies, the findings are brought together in a summary chapter and policy implications and strategies for change are suggested.

Children of Migrant Fathers: The Effects of Father Absence on Swazi Children's Preparedness for School. *Margaret Zoller Booth. 1993. Comparative Education Review 39, no. 2 (May): 195–210.*

Among eighty rural Swazi children tested upon entrance to formal schooling, those whose fathers were absent for long periods because of work migration had significantly lower scores on school readiness tests than did children with fathers at home. Results were not related to sex of child or family socioeconomic status.

Starting at the Bottom: Towards the Development of an Indigenous School Readiness Program for South African Children Being Reared at Home. *Christine Liddell and Chris McConville. 1994. Early Child Development and Care 97: 1–15.*

The effectiveness of a home-based enrichment program was assessed using thirty matched pairs of experimental and control group five-year-olds from poor, black South African families. The enrichment provided experimental families with educational materials thought suitable for the promotion of school readiness. Although results indicated some positive benefits from the intervention, they were not statistically significant.

The Power and Passion of Playpacks. *Narelle Smith. 1993. Paper presented at the European Conference on the Quality of Early Childhood Education, September 7–9, Paris, France.*

Using an action research model, this study concentrated on easing the transition into school by providing an induction program for preschool children which promotes the emotional needs of the child within the family. The research followed an ecological perspective, considering individual needs within the frameworks of school, home, and community in England. Research included a model of "plan, do,

review and re-plan. Information was obtained from transcribed interviews, storytelling sessions at school, home visits, and an overall evaluation. Results show that a parent-centered approach, incorporating a partnership model and addressing rights of passage effectively meets the needs of all involved in the transition to school. Rites of separation were eased by a gradual introduction to school one day per week. Home visits and storytelling were crucial transitional activities. By supplying a set of materials to be used at home (playpacks), the school provided a sense of continuity between school and home for the child and family. Each playpack has an emphasis on play and follows a different theme. Examples include: science, numbers, language activities, listening skills, drama, art, visual discrimination, sequencing, and fine motor skills. The research had the following impacts on practice: (1) barriers were broken down; (2) partnerships with parents were formed; (3) children felt more settled at school; (4) quality relationships were formed; and (5) early identification of special educational needs took place.

Home and School, A Child's View. *J. Goodnow and A. Burns. 1985. Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia Pty. Ltd.*

Using concepts about children and their environments, *Home and School: A Child's View* addresses the way in which the settings of home and school, and the transitions between them, match or disappoint children's hopes and expectations. The book is based on interviews with primary school children who express their opinions about their families and home activities (chapters one and two); about their teachers and the activities they engage in at school (chapters three and four); and about their special relationships with friends (chapter five). A final chapter presents some guidelines for change. The interviews help understand children, the contexts of home and school, and the nature of individual differences.

Critical Elements and Practices of Transition Programs Linking Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School. *Youmans, Jung. 1993. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 18-22, San Francisco, CA.*

This paper examines how various elements of five early childhood to elementary school transition programs are being developed and carried out. Five transition programs were identified and investigated. The programs studied possessed the following characteristics: shared leadership and decision-making among stakeholders, comprehensive and integrated services, family involvement and empowerment, cultural and linguistic sensitivity, family-school communication, joint staff development, developmentally appropriate practices, and program outcomes and effectiveness data. The programs examined included: (1) the Head Start Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project in Santa Clara, California; (2) Very Important Preschoolers (VIP) Village, which serves Imperial Beach and South San Diego, California; (3) the Head Start Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project in Phoenix, Arizona; (4) Transitional Bilingual Education Program in Irvine, California; and (5) the Head Start Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project in Reno, Nevada. The paper provides an inventory of specific approaches and program components that have proven to be effective in easing the transition from early childhood programs to elementary schools. An appendix provides the addresses and telephone numbers of the five transition programs.

On the World Wide Web

The Center for the Future of Children: http://www.futureofchildren.org

"The Role of School in Sustaining Early Childhood Program Benefits," by Doris Entwisle, PhD. This paper provides a discussion of the process of elementary schooling, identifying links between preschool experience and school success. http://www.futureofchildren.org/fto07_fto.htm

ERIC School Readiness Site: http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/readyweb/readyweb.html

While this site presents materials with a US perspective, it may be of interest to those looking at transitions in the Majority World.

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The New CG Secretariat:

An International Exchange of ECCD Knowledge and Experience

Steps toward maximizing the potential of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG) took an exponential leap forward September 7-12, 1997 when the International Secretariat met together for the first time in Washington D.C. At the meeting those who have been serving as Regional Representatives to the CG came together with the Secretariat to determine how regional interests and expertise could be better integrated into ongoing activities, with the goal of increasing the Secretariat's responsiveness to both donor decentralization and to growing expertise within the regions. The result of the meeting was a restructuring of the Secretariat to include representatives from seven Majority World regions.

Historically, the Secretariat has served both the donor consortium and the field as a whole. It has always been more than an administrative headquarters for the consortium of donors that constitute the Consultative Group: it has engaged in knowledge gathering, synthesis and dissemination, networking, provision of technical backstopping to partners, and ECCD advocacy. These are activities which the regional representatives have also been conducting in their respective parts of the world. In the past, the Consultative Group was not able to make optimal use of its regional representatives. Because the regional representatives did not have a budget for their activities on behalf of the CG consortium, they were both over-called-upon to supply advice and guidance and under-recompensed for their time and contributions. It seemed wise to bring together efforts and experience in a forum that could benefit all.

As a result of the September meeting, the Secretariat, based in Haydenville, Massachusetts, (where the staff consists of Judith Evans, Director; Ellen Ilfeld, Director of Communications; Elizabeth Hanssen, writer/editor) has additional members based in the Majority World. These include:

Robert Myers, Founding Member
Marta Arango, Latin America
Feny de los Angeles Bautista, Southeast Asia
Janet Brown, Caribbean countries
Barnabas Otaala, Eastern and Southern Africa (Anglophone)
Jacqueline Steir, Arab Countries (Youssef Hanar, attended the meeting)
Ayla Goksel, Central Asia
Jim Irvine, (pro-tem), SAARC countries (Seema Agarwal attended the meeting)

We plan to add individuals from Francophone Africa and Eastern Europe in the future.

The restructuring will allow for an expansion of the Secretariat's technical knowledge base and enhance its ability to promote inter-agency collaboration, knowledge exchange within national and regional contexts. Specifically, the structure will allow the International Secretariat to:

■ **Serve CG partners more effectively.**

Most of the CG donor partners are regionalizing or decentralizing their funding and decision-making structures. With increasing focus on regions and nations, it is important that there be expertise and knowledge available at those levels, rather than having them located only at a Northern base.

International donor agencies and the CG Secretariat are receiving increased requests for technical assistance in ECCD. Many governments and regional offices are more consciously seeking the knowledge and experience of those who come from countries in the region with similar needs and resources. CG partners with regional and national offices are seeking access to networks which already exist locally to promote good programmes for young children and families *in situ*. The International Secretariat will help to promote and strengthen local resources and personnel who can provide the necessary assistance within their own countries, or through exchanges with other South regions.

An example of the way the restructured Secretariat is already serving CG partners more effectively was seen in the May 1997 meeting on Inter-agency ECCD Communications in Paris, where several organizations agreed that the CG regional structure would be a good mechanism to use in promoting better cross-regional, inter-agency ECCD communications.

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■ **Serve regions more effectively.**

Over the years, nations and regions have become more pro-active in the definition of their own needs and in the development of culturally-appropriate programmes, moving beyond those which have been transplanted from the North. There are increased advocacy efforts within regions to promote ECCD within the context of regional and national goals and resources.

At this point in time, knowledge about ECCD in several Majority World regions is well developed and codified. This knowledge needs to be disseminated to the North and to other Majority World countries. There is a need to provide supports for better information flow from South to North and from South to South.

The Way Forward

At the Washington meeting, the restructured Secretariat identified two agendas—a shared agenda for the International Secretariat as a whole, and individualized regional agendas. During the three days of discussions, there was a sharing of strategies for establishing/strengthening good knowledge exchange networks within each region, and a systematic analysis of communication and knowledge exchange possibilities.

As a *Common Agenda* for the Secretariat, we agreed that we could work together to create/offer the following:

- An extensive technical knowledge base that could be used to support advocacy and the development of appropriate policies and programmes for young children and their families.
- Knowledge-exchange activities, planned and executed in a variety of venues.
- Joint publications. This would include:
  - the development of region-specific materials for the *Coordinators' Notebook*;
  - adaptation of the lead articles, modified in response to regional and national contexts and languages;
  - regional World Wide Web Sites on ECCD;
  - common "information sheets," such as the EFA *Eight is too Late* publication, that could be developed, translated, and then disseminated to a variety of fora.
- Two annual meetings of the Secretariat focused on ECCD themes, which would allow us to compile the "state of the art/state of the practice" information emerging from national and regional experiences, together with an international synthesis of issues and concerns. Meetings will be held at six-month intervals. At least one meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual CG consortium meeting; the other will be rotated among the regions to give the Secretariat more direct exposure and exchange with national and regional donor representatives and interested government personnel, as well as providing members with the opportunity to visit current programmes.
- Mutual support and partnership in an ongoing South-South exchange.
- Expanded advocacy potential through more extensive coverage at ECCD and other international meetings, thereby providing a collective presence on behalf of ECCD.

Rather than trying to provide universal coverage of all countries within a region from the start, these plans are being built upon the strengths existing in the region, beginning with those countries or groups already working on quality ECCD efforts. As networks are strengthened, there will be an attempt to reach out to include and support others. Specifically, the Regional Agenda includes the creation/development of the following:

- Individualized regional plans to promote ECCD networking and knowledge exchange.
- Regional and national team-building among diverse stakeholders, including donor agencies, NGOs, government personnel, multinational organizations, researchers, and diverse sector representatives. A short-list of strong allies will be identified who could be activated quickly to work toward particular shared goals.
- Building up communication networks through

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the creation of regional mailing lists (and e-mail networks where possible) of key players who would act as a team to brainstorm, plan, and share policies and programmes across the region.

- Activities aimed at strengthening national networks and cross-regional networks of ECCD practitioners and stakeholders to include:
  - convening or participating in meetings
  - gathering and sharing regional/national information about ECCD topics
  - identifying or sharing of resources that exist in the region
  - facilitating and participating in action research projects
  - training and capacity-building activities
  - itinerant knowledge networking—the exchange that happens through travel, staff exchanges, field visits, and other person-to-person events.

To fund this effort, the Consultative Group, through a special grant from USAID, is preparing to offer seed money as a baseline operating budget. In addition, individual donors have already contributed generously to existing networks (for example, Bernard van Leer has provided extensive support to the Arab Resource Collective, which carries out several of the activities mentioned above; the World Bank has agreed to fund at least two regional networking meetings in the next year). We are hoping that other donor agencies will see ways to co-support this effort so that each regional plan can go forward autonomously, while at the same time contributing to the synergistic knowledge exchange within the Consultative Group, and the field of ECCD at large.

Regional Status and Plans

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At the Washington meeting, Marta Arango, director and founder of CINDE (The International Center for Advanced ECED Studies), outlined the Center's history and discussed its progress. One of CINDE's accomplishments during the past year includes the certification of its graduate program (which has trained 1600 graduate students) by the Colombian Institute of Higher Education. Originally established to develop alternatives in education for young children, CINDE is now in a transitional

UNICEF 5253 Nicole Toutoujin

phase, moving from a development and testing stage to one focusing on the dissemination of information on a wider level. Marta presented a proposed plan for CINDE's ongoing development which focuses on the regionalization of ECCD efforts in Latin America. CINDE, in moving increasingly toward a regional approach, is emphasizing the shift of programmes from external funding to support at the local and/or regional level, and the subsequent community ownership of completed projects. To facilitate CINDE's transition toward this regional structure, the following tasks were identified for the upcoming year:

- Update mapping of ECCD networks in the region. A three-day meeting of existing regional networks was held in December. A questionnaire will also be used to gather information across the regions.
- The development of a regional Web Site on ECCD as a mechanism for disseminating information on a wide scale.
- The organization of a project to analyze existing child development indicators and measurement instruments in the region.
- The organization of a south-south activity involving people from the Caribbean and the Southeast Asia regions (and open to other regions as well), to offer exposure to innovative ECCD programs in Latin America.

CINDE is also organizing additional training

activities, and is publishing two issues of *Creando Unidos* (Growing Together), a bulletin which focuses on participatory programs. Marta has proposed a new format for the publication to include materials from the *Coordinator's Notebook*.

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Youssef Hajjar attended the Washington meeting on behalf of the Arab Resource Collective. He is the Public Affairs Coordinator of ARC. Working as an interface between practitioners, academic and training institutions, local and regional programmes, and local funding partners, ARC facilitates networking among ECCD programmes for the region. ARC has recently addressed such areas as community awareness and participation (specifically targeting parents), and the adoption of holistic and integrated approaches to programming and implementation. In addition to their work in ECCD, ARC organises around Children's Rights in the Arab World and facilitates the Arab Child to Child Programme. ARC's philosophy is that of "collective" ownership. Its regional network is already well established, with field workers and policy makers representing many countries in the region. This year ARC will conduct two regional workshops: the first will focus on inclusive approaches in working with disabled children, and the second will review the ongoing development of descriptive situational reports, tools, and training. The following are some of the many tasks ARC is currently undertaking:

- The development of an Arab-English glossary of terms used in ECCD
- The production of an Arabic version of a series of videos on Community-Based Rehabilitation
- The production of a regional newsletter
- Coordination of the ARC team and other consultants and trainers to support local activities and training
- Compilation of an ECCD database

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During the past year, significant advances were made in relation to early childhood in the region. During the Barbados conference in March of 1997, a draft Plan of Action for ECCD in the Caribbean region was presented and subsequently accepted and endorsed by participating countries. A time frame of six years was given to accomplish the proposed objectives. This Plan (available through the CG Web Site) outlines the issues involved in establishing ECCD as a priority throughout the region, including legislation, financing, training, curriculum development, and research. To increase participation and communication throughout the region, Janet has identified the following mechanisms:

- Participation in a regional meeting in June 1998 planned by the CHILD FOCUS project (CCDC and Institute of Education, UWI). 300 participants are expected, including delegates from seventeen countries.
- A review of progress on the National Plans of Action within the region.
- The establishment of Working Groups to address priority tasks for the region.
- The development of case studies to advance country-based work and/or to facilitate identification of a specific topic for the June 1998 meeting.
- The establishment of a "consultants group" of advisors on regional work, drawing on best practices, colleagues, and academics within the region.
- Development of a Web Site and Resource Center to better disseminate materials and information to those interested in ECCD.
- The implementation of general communication support within the region following the June 1998 meeting (i.e., newsletter, e-mail network, gathering of materials for Web Site).

CENTRAL ASIA: AYLA GÖKSEL

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Because of the lack of any kind of network in the region, Ayla Göksel (Director of the Mother Child Education Foundation) set forth a preliminary plan to promote communication and knowledge sharing in the region, with an initial focus

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on the gathering and exchange of information. Starting with a mapping of the state of early childhood initiatives in the region, Ayla hopes to identify key players, organisations, programmes, and policies that can serve to facilitate the process of furthering ECCD in the area. A regional "dialogue" workshop is planned for the spring of 1998, where key persons (local consultants, those involved in ECCD, as well as representatives of international agencies active in the region) can share their experiences, build networks, and work towards establishing an ECCD strategy for the region. The publication of a regional newsletter will follow the workshop and will also be posted on the Internet, to increase exposure to ECCD issues throughout, and beyond, the region. Other proposed activities intended to foster the sharing of knowledge and to increase programme capacities are:

- A situation analysis conducted by local consultants within the region, which can also serve as a resource handbook for those in the field.
- A focused ECCD workshop on a designated subject area (e.g., birth to three, school readiness, parent education).
- Attendance at various regional workshops/conferences.

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During 1997, Seema Agarwal served as representative in the region. However, Seema left India in October 1998. In anticipation of her leaving, Seema chose to identify key issues in the region during her presentation at the Washington meeting. This information will be useful to her successor. Jim Irvine is filling the position on a pro-tem basis.

Seema provided an overview of ECCD in the region (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives), a region in which attention to ECCD has increased significantly over the past two decades. India has one of the largest government-planned and implemented ECCD programmes, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme. Although ICDS has been in existence for almost three decades, its impact on child development has been limited, particularly among the birth to three population. While there exists within ICDS a framework for increased attention to this group, Seema reiterated that implementation is difficult in the Indian context. There is, however, growing awareness that ECCD involves more than attending to children's physical health. And, in recent years, donor agencies, governments, and institutions have expressed an urgent interest in exploring how all the needs (cognitive, social, emotional as well as health and nutrition) of children birth to three can be met. Seema discussed how the growing shift toward decentralization will affect services in the region as provision comes increasingly from local bodies, and she stressed that coordination is a key to success. Traditional means of communication are not sufficient, therefore, additional communication strategies must be developed. Several areas of focus for strengthening regional systems were also identified:

- The identification of successful culturally-rooted and community-managed childrearing practices.
- The securing of enough resources for ECCD programmes, coupled with the need to define the content and nature of these programmes.
- The building of supportive partnerships among the private sector, institutions, academic institutions, the media, communities, and families.
- The development of a refined set of indicators to assist in monitoring child development.

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During the Washington meeting, Barnabas Otaala discussed the many obstacles facing efforts in early childhood development in the region, among them violence, economic degradation, and corruption. Barnabas noted the difficulties confronted by those who work in ECCD, such as language and distance constraints. He also spoke of the difficulties encountered by the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA), which was instituted in 1994 and is still functioning as an interim committee, although it has been accepted as a Working Group within the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Barnabas stressed the need for a more permanent structure, increased funding, improved communications, and personnel. Collaborating with UNESCO and the Aga Khan Foundation, ECDNA has undertaken the updating of an existing database on ECCD

in Africa (previously published by UNESCO), and the translating of *Toward a Fair Start* into Kiswahili. ECDNA also coordinated the Summer School at the University of Namibia, which took place from September 29-October 17 1997, made possible through UNICEF and offered in cooperation with the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada. The purpose behind this institute was to upgrade the skills and knowledge of both trained and high level programme officers from within the region working in ECCD, with a focus on the needs of children, families, and communities in rural areas. In addition, an ECCD workshop was held December 1–3 1997 in Cape Town, South Africa, with support from the World Bank. The workshop examined issues related to policy, advocacy, and programming. Activities being undertaken by ECDNA include:

- A mapping of ECCD people and activities in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa.
- Identification of local and national consultants who can work on ECCD, and compilation of a directory of experts.
- Development of a regional newsletter.
- Organisation of periodic workshops, seminars, and learning activities based on regionally-defined priorities.

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At the Washington meeting, Feny de los Angeles-Bautista outlined the ongoing activities taking place in South East Asia, which include regional and sub-regional conferences, seminars and workshops specifically for ECCD, as well as for other child-focused issues, and participation in international conferences as a means of renewing or initiating contact with others in the field. In addition, training programs and study visits (facilitated by UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank) involving several organizations and individuals from two or three countries have been utilized as methods of disseminating and sharing knowledge. A regional institute on ECCD took place in Singapore from November 3–14, 1997, which focused on networking activities, continuing education, and communication activities. Also in November, the Korean Ministry of Education sent officials on a study visit to the Philippines. Further activities to promote regional partnerships have been identified:

- Intra-regional meetings to facilitate the sharing of existing knowledge and expertise among countries of the region.
- Organized shared learning experiences involving ECCD professionals and practitioners in the region. This can be achieved through annual conferences, collaborative research, study visits, and the development of a Regional Institute for ECCD.
- Publication of a regional newsletter.
- Completion of a regional mapping.
- Compilation of case studies from different countries in the region.

The formation of a regional committee is in the making to accomplish these objectives, and to ensure a participatory approach to activities.

ENDNOTES

[1] The group did not come to a decision on the name of the new configuration. We are using Members of the International Secretariat until we can decide on an appropriate name.

[2] The themes for 1998 included: Policies and Programmes for Children from Conception to Three" and Indicators.

UNICEF 5653 Jeremy Hartley

Activities of the Secretariat

Issue #22 of the Coordinators' Notebook *will explore* **Inclusive Education: Early childhood programming and children with special needs**. *Issue #21 of the* CN *will focus on* **Programming for children birth–three, with emphasis on parent education programmes**. *We welcome your input on these topics.*

The expanded Secretariat of the Consultative Group has undertaken an expanded scope of activity! Regional ECCD networking meetings have taken place in Latin America and Africa, with active coordination and participation by the CG international Secretariat members and partner organisations. In addition, regional ECCD training institutes took place in Singapore (Southeast Asia region) and Namibia (African regions). Secretariat members Feny de los Angeles Bautista and Barnabas Otaala, as well as Judith L. Evans and other CG affiliates, served as organisers and faculty for these institutes. Further ECCD training institutes are planned for Latin America, South Asia (SAARC countries), and Southeast Asia in 1998. Regional networking meetings are also being planned for 1998 in Central Asia and the Arab countries. For more information on these institutes and meetings, contact the CG Secretariat. (See page 47 for the regional plans and page 66 for descriptions of the networking meetings.)

At the administrative office of the Secretariat, the staff has been hard at work on a CD-rom on ECCD programming. This project, carried out in partnership with the World Bank/EDI, UNESCO, and other CG partners, will bring together a rich library of resources on ECCD in electronic format. The centerpiece of the CD-rom will be an instructional guide on creating effective ECCD programming, written by Judith L. Evans, with input from Robert G. Myers and other leaders in the field. The CD-rom will include implementation tools, fact sheets, checklists, short mini-courses on related topics, as well as a set of case studies illustrating diverse programming options and contexts, and an archive of background materials and documents. *We are seeking good case studies to include in this archive: if you would like to contribute descriptions of the projects sponsored by your organisation, please contact the Secretariat by e-mail at: info@ecdgroup.com, or by fax at (415) 268-7279. We can provide guidelines for writing and organising the information.*

Network Notes

Activities of the Secretariat.....p. 52
Activities of the Partners.....p. 53
Publications.....p. 60
Meetings.....p. 65
Calendar.....p. 70

Activities of the Partners

Bernard van Leer Foundation

Oscar van Leer Award. On 17 October 1997 the Oscar van Leer Award 1997 was presented to the Kushanda Preschool Programme in Zimbabwe. The Oscar van Leer Award is presented to projects that have played a prominent role in stimulating parents and the community to become involved in the development of young children's innate potential. The Kushanda Preschool Programme is the fourth organisation receiving the Oscar van Leer Award. The project started in 1983 with financial support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Kushandas task in the first three years was to establish a preschool at a cooperative in Marondera, an effort that was successful. The same preschool became a training centre for teachers from neighbouring communities. The Outreach Dissemination Programme followed. This led to a much wider coverage of children in both commercial farms and communal and resettlement lands. When the project support ended in 1993, there were over 150 Kushanda-supported ECED centres. There are now over 450.

Workshop on Programmes for Turkish Migrants. From the 25–27 of September, a cross national workshop on Support Materials and Support Strategies for Turkish Migrant Parents took place at the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The workshop was jointly organised by the *Arbeitskreis Neue Erziehung* and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. It brought together those projects supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation which work with Turkish parents, such as *Samenspel op Maat* from Rotterdam, *Moeders informeren Moeders* from Breda, *Vormingscentrum voor de Begeleiding van het Jonge Kind* from Ghent, *Arbeitskreis neue Erziehung* in Berlin, Foundation for the Support of Womens Work from Istanbul, and various consultants. The Averroes Foundation also participated in this workshop.

The workshop centred around two inter-connected issues:

a) How can Turkish migrant parents be reached effectively?

b) What is the potential for dissemination of the support materials developed by *Arbeitskreis Neue Erziehung* beyond the German context?

For this workshop various background papers were produced in German on issues such as teachers' perceptions of intercultural education, the role of religion, interviews with Turkish parents on their childhoods and those of their children, bilingualism in a monolingual society, multimedia intervention, and changes in childrearing as a result of migration. A reader will be compiled including these background papers and the workshop report.

Samenspel—Mothers Speaking: A study on the experience of mothers in the *Samenspel* project (by Nanette Kieneker and Judith Maas) is a new publication in the Bernard van Leer Foundation series *Working Papers in Early Childhood Development*. *Samenspel* is an approach which emphasises the central position of children and their parents, and those who work directly with them. It is of interest to play-leaders, leaders of preschools, playgroups, and child care centres, and others working with parents and young children. The Working Paper describes the results of a study conducted by the authors and students of Education at the University of Amsterdam on the experiences of mothers with *Samenspel*. The publication can

be obtained from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, P.O. Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, The Netherlands. Tel. (31 70) 351 2040. Fax (31 70) 350 2373.

Early Childhood Matters—the Newsletter of the Bernard van Leer Foundation

In February 1998 the Bernard van Leer Foundation will launch *Early Childhood Matters—the Newsletter of the Bernard van Leer Foundation* to replace its current *Newsletter*.

The first *Newsletter* appeared in 1971 "to fill the need for a periodic publication giving information on the activities of the Bernard van Leer Foundation for the benefit of all of those connected with Foundation-supported projects in various countries, and for the world of the van Leer Group of companies." It has subsequently evolved into a publication that centres on the world of early childhood development (ECD), drawing principally on the work of the projects that the Foundation supports. At the same time, its audience has expanded to include people involved or interested in ECD, at all levels, in more than 130 countries and territories.

UNICEF 94-1151/ Keiko Miwa

Early Childhood Matters is a logical next step in that evolution. A publication solely focused on ECD, it will allow for the exploration of themes and topics, and experiences and ideas in ECD, in much greater depth than has been possible until now. It will also feature articles from a wider range of contributors. In addition, it will be more attractive, practical, and accessible. However, most of its content will continue to be drawn from work with children from birth to eight years, and its principal target audiences will remain practitioners and policy makers in the world of ECD.

Early Childhood Matters will appear three times a year: February, June, and October. A limited number of themes will be covered in each edition. For 1998, the concentration will be on "Culturally appropriate approaches in ECD" and "Effectiveness in ECD".

Early Childhood Matters especially welcomes contributions for possible publication that draw on direct experiences with young children, their families, and their communities, which include not only description, but analysis and reflection as well. A guide for authors is available. Contributions should be sent to:

Jim Smale, Editor, *Early Childhood Matters*, Bernard van Leer Foundation, P.O. Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, The Netherlands. Fax: (31 70) 350 2373, e-mail: jim.smale@bvleerf.nl

Revisiting Former Partnerships

Between 1978 and 1984, the Bernard van Leer Foundation supported the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's Parent-to-

Activities of the Partners

UNICEF 1565 Mehta

Parent project. In September 1997 High/Scope began carrying out a one-year follow-up study, again supported by BvLF, to examine the evolution and current status of family support programmes.

The original project worked with local agencies in ten locations around the USA, each concentrating on a different target group, but all using a methodology that linked specially-trained home visitors with parents of young children on a peer-to-peer basis. From 1981 onward, the project concentrated on three locations, where Regional Development and Training Centres took over dissemination and training within their regions. Although there was a major problem with funding the new activities, at least eighteen new agencies were trained in the methodology.

The follow-up study will revisit four of the locations. Archival searches, case study interviews, and site visits will be carried out in order to compile sociodemographic data and to collect descriptive programme materials. An analysis will develop portraits of each agency and community and will look for contrasts, as well as similarities, in the agencies' approaches to developing and implementing family support programmes. Content analysis of materials collected will determine what, if any, continuity now exists with the components of the PTP model. A report should be ready by September 1998.

For BvLF, this is an ideal opportunity to learn more about the processes involved in following up formerly-supported projects and to gain more insight into long-term effects. As part of its five-year strategic plan, BvLF intends to pay more attention to evaluating the impact that projects have had over the long term. Such evaluations can not only look backwards at what happened and why, but also to the future: what can the Foundation do with the knowledge it has acquired, how can it use this information, and how can it be shared?

The Foundation would be interested in reports of similar studies that have been carried out or, indeed, from any programmes that were supported in the past and that may be considering carrying out similar work in the future. An example of such a study is one which was conducted in 1994 by the Bokamoso Pre-School Programme in Botswana, which looked at how some of the Basarwa children (also known as San or Bushmen) had been integrated into the formal education system. An article on the study appeared in

the January 1996 edition of the BvLF *Newsletter* (Number 81). The report, *The Challenges of Change*, is available from the Kuru Development Trust, PO Box 219, Ghanzi, Botswana.

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UNESCO

UNESCO General Assembly. The following is an update on the General Assembly as of 27 October 1997. A number of points were made regarding ECCD in the Plenary Sessions.

A number of Member States have stressed the fact that early childhood programming should be seen as a way to increase social cohesion and to prepare young children for entry into the education system (Netherlands); it should also help states to identify and meet the needs of children at risk and prepare them for better social integration (Ireland). Some Member States are taking steps to include early childhood within the education system: for example, Uruguay plans to add two years of initial education for children four to five years old to the compulsory education system. Others are putting in place social protection measures for children and programmes for child education, while others are highlighting the importance of early education within the socio-cultural context of their countries (Tunisia).

To show their commitment to early childhood, the following countries have submitted Draft Resolutions: Tunisia, to encourage research on early childhood education, and the Netherlands, to strengthen early childhood programming and capacity building and to ask for a progress report on early childhood education around the world for the next General Conference. Luxemburg, Uruguay and Croatia have also joined in to support this resolution.

Some Member States discussed actions that are being taken which, although not directly related to early childhood, have an impact on it nonetheless, such as the creation of new Ministries of Youth, Family, Women and Children (Panama); the expansion of learning opportunities for children (Bangladesh); values education (Philippines, Iran); intersectoral action between education and health (Uganda); environmental protection (Madagascar); planning, organisation, and management of the whole system of formal and non-formal education (Slovak Republic); attention to gender equality (Norway); and the draft Declaration of the Responsibilities of the Present Generation to the Future Generations.

On the fifth of November, the Netherlands delegation organised an early morning breakfast session to discuss the Early Childhood substantive report presented for the General Conference and other early childhood matters. The following ECCD materials were distributed: *Eight is Too Late*, *Towards a Fair Start*, and other documents.

UNESCO Publications

- New publications: *The proceedings of the Ouagadougou 1996 Regional Meeting on Early Childhood in Francophone Africa* is available, as well as No. 7 in the *Action Research Monograph* series which outlines the training module used in the Mali Clos d'Enfants project.
- The printed version of *Eight is Too Late* in French is out; the Spanish translation will be ready by the end of the year.

Activities of the Partners

- The following publications are in preparation: No. 8 in the *Action Research Monograph* series on the Averroes parent home-based education programmes; a *Directory of ECCE Organisations in Europe and North America* (the finishing touches are being given to its overview article); and a *Thematic Portfolio on Early Childhood Education* is being prepared in cooperation with the Global Education for All Division.
- The Chinese National Commission for UNESCO has finished translating and printing the *Enhancing the Skills of Early Childhood Trainers Training Pack* into Chinese. The Arabic version should be ready before the end of the year.

A Search for Appropriate ECCD Indicators

The following is excerpted from the letter of Heads of the Jomtien partners organisations to their field offices in September 1997.

"We learned through the Mid-Decade Review of Progress towards Education for All that led up to the Amman meeting both the importance and shortcomings of national capacities to monitor progress in basic education. Effective monitoring is essential for sound decision-making and planning in education, as in other fields. This is certainly one area where our collective experience and expertise can be put to good use in helping governments and key national institutions to build their institutional and technical capacities. One aim should be that every country will be able, by the end of the decade, to measure the progress it has made towards its Education for All goals and assess its achievements and shortfalls on the basis of a reliable monitoring system that extends to community and school levels."

In early October, a joint UNESCO-UNICEF technical workshop on effective monitoring of EFA was held to address some of these concerns and to prepare a set of EFA Monitoring Core Indicators to improve the reporting for the End-of-Decade assessment of EFA. This is a minimum set of indicators, so as to facilitate the process of reporting. As you may be aware, Early Childhood is one of the six "target dimensions" of EFA (see paragraph eight of the Jomtien Framework for Action: "Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children.")

In the minimum set of core indicators for the monitoring of EFA that the workshop agreed to, the following six deal with early childhood care and education:

1. Demography: children under six as percentage of total population.
2. Participation: percentage of enrolment in a structured (non-formal and/or formal) early childhood programme.
3. Policy: presence of an early childhood national policy and/or curriculum.
4. Training: percentage of teachers (including grade one teachers), caregivers, and parents/families trained in early childhood matters.
5. Funding: percentage of (national) budget devoted to early childhood care and education.
6. School readiness: health/nutritional status (height/age) and percentage of first graders who have had some form of early childhood programme.

Special note: early childhood special needs is a cross-cutting issue and would appear in all six indicators.

Activities of the Partners

Inter-American Development Bank

IADB approves $20 million for Integral Child Care in Bolivia. The Inter-American Development Bank has approved a $20 million soft loan to Bolivia to support projects that contribute to healthier growth and development of approximately 70,000 poor children under six years of age in rural or marginalised urban areas. The main objective of the program, which will finance 360 child services projects in 200 municipalities, is to assist the process of consolidating services that provide basic child needs, including primary health care, nutrition, stimulation of early learning capacities, and protection. The resources will provide assistance in bringing child services into the existing institutional framework and will strengthen the capacity of different government levels to design and supervise decentralised activities to benefit children, with the involvement of civil society.

The program will be coordinated at the national level by the Social Investment Fund. The program will help improve the physical, psychosocial, cognitive, and emotional life of children through support for the organisation and the active involvement of families, communities, and of public and civil society institutions. The initiative includes mechanisms to ensure that the quality and delivery of the services respond to local needs.

Projects include the establishment of comprehensive centers serving twenty-five to forty children for eleven months of the year. Indirect services will also be financed in which the family and community will receive training for childcare. The IADB loan, from the Fund for Special Operations, is for a forty-year term with a ten-year grace period. Annual interest will be one percent during the grace period and two percent thereafter.

Aga Khan Foundation

Within the coming year, AKF will seek to consolidate its experiences and knowledge regarding two clusters of programmes. The first relates to the pre- to primary school movement/transition for children, or linkages (the topic of this *Notebook*). The second relates to community schools, an area where much of AKF's work is at the ECD as well as primary level.

Linkages have been a long-standing focus of AKF programmes. AKF has funded an interesting cluster of projects on transitions, and those at AKF are trying to come to a better understanding of this period and process. AKF's linkage programmes include the Madrasa Resource Centre in East Africa, *Bodh Shiksha Samiti*, the Aga Khan schools in India, the pre- to primary community schools in rural Sindh, the 'class 1a' of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, AKF projects in Portugal, and a parenting programme in the USA.

The second area AFK has focused on, that of community schools, involves an overlap of projects with the preceding programmes which address transitions. It is fascinating to see the evolution of the community schools, particularly as they evolve ways to finance their efforts, attend to the quality of the teaching and learning, improve on the management of the schools, and look to different types of resource centres/resource persons for specialised support. AKF hopes to put together a report/publication related to community schools.

61

UNICEF/2464/Murray-Lee

62

Publications

The authors of this book, which provides a critical analysis of what has been accomplished within primary health care programmes, call for a "Child Quality-of-Life Revolution". They define this as the need for "a comprehensive strategy that extends beyond the health sector and combats the structural causes of poverty, malnutrition and poor health. It must promote a model of development that gives higher priority to meeting the basic needs of the poor than to fueling economic growth that benefits only the rich. ... The health sector must work closely with other social and economic sectors, to assure that the needs and rights of women, children and other vulnerable groups are put first, not last. ... In short, a health strategy that seriously seeks to improve children's quality of life must be acutely and astutely political." (170)

Questioning the Solution provides an excellent introduction to and review of primary health care, including both concept and application. While Alma Ata established a comprehensive approach to health, the Child Survival Revolution promoted narrowly-focused programming which violated the vision of Alma Ata. Another factor which contributes to the failure of the PHC approach to date in many settings is the underlying issue of poverty that limits the extent to which PHC goals can be reached. The message from the review is that Western-defined and derived systems of health care cannot be imposed on or sustained within Majority World countries. There is a need to take a much broader look at the social and economic context within which programmes for women and children are being developed.

The following briefly summarises the various sections of the book. Part One explores the rise and fall of Primary Health Care (PHC), originally envisioned as a comprehensive strategy for providing services *and* addressing the underlying social, economic, and political causes of poor health. In Part Two, the authors, as a case study, show how marketing Oral Rehydration Therapy as a commercial product, rather than encouraging self-reliance, has turned this potentially life-saving technology into yet another way of exploiting and further impoverishing the poor. Part Three examines the factors that determine the health of populations. Part Four turns to solutions that empower the poor.

Questioning the Solution: The Politics of Primary Health Care and Child Survival

David Werner, David Sanders, Jason Weston, Steve Babb and Bill Rodriguez. Palo Alto, CA: HealthWrights, 1997.

UNICEF 3172/89

Many of the lessons to be learned from the PHC experience as described in this book can be applied to the field of early childhood care and development as well, particularly in terms of what is meant by and done in the name of 'community mobilisation' 'participation' and 'empowerment'. We, in the field, need to examine our own efforts in relation to each of these.

If the health sector—and those of us that interface with it—heeds the message in this book, there might well be an opening for us to work together to promote a holistic view of the child and to promote a Child Quality-of-Life Revolution.

This is a 'must read' book. As noted by reviewer Norbert Hirschorn, MD:

> David Werner and David Sanders are truth tellers who force us to confront essential and difficult questions. Anyone who is not uncomfortable reading this book has simply missed the point.

Order information: Hardcover US $30. Softcover US $18. For overseas shipping add US $5.00. Make checks payable to HealthWrights. P.O. Box 1344, Palo Alto, CA 94302. Fax: (650)325-1080. e-mail: healthwrights@igc.org. Books can also be purchased from International People's Health Council, Apartado 3267, Managua, Nicaragua, or SALS Bookstore, Industrial House, 350 Victoria Road, Salt River, Cape Town 7925, South Africa.

Counting the Full Cost: Parental and Community Financing of Education in East Asia

MARY BRAY. WASHINGTON D.C.: WORLD BANK, 1996.

As a result of The Education for All (EFA) initiative, 155 countries pledged to take the necessary steps to provide primary education for all children by the end of the decade. In Amman, Jordan in 1996, the EFA commitments were reaffirmed, the resources required to achieve them were examined, their effectiveness was considered, and the international community was encouraged to rethink its resource priorities in order to meet these goals. This book illustrates that although some governments are increasing their investment in primary education, parents are required more and more to support the costs of basic education—directly and indirectly.

As a result of a collaboration between UNICEF and the World Bank, studies were conducted in nine East Asian countries (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) to identify the contributions families are required to make to support their children's education. In some instances it is substantial. There are examples where household contributions to education are greater than what is provided by government. (This is true in Cambodia and Vietnam, for example.) Not surprisingly, the burden borne by the poorest households is much greater than that borne by the wealthiest households.

The discussion in *Counting the Full Cost* is chiefly concerned with the primary and secondary levels, with a main focus on formal education. However, the study also includes out-of-school tutoring, which in some societies is a major expenditure. While much of the focus is on cash contributions, the study recognises that there may also be demands on parents for materials and labour, and that the full expense of education includes the opportunity costs of forgone earnings.

The book does not focus on the costs of early childhood programmes and the costs to parents of such efforts. However, the studies are extremely useful in helping to understand what is required of parents to educate their children once they enter the formal system. Further, it is clear that in situations where families are already con-

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tributing heavily to children's primary school, they cannot be expected to also contribute to the costs of early childhood programmes. It would be extremely useful if comparable studies could be conducted on early childhood programmes to know what the real contributions of parents are to these efforts through cash payments as well as through materials and labour.

The book can be obtained from the World Bank in the U.S., 1818 H Street N.W., Washington D.C., 10433. Tel: (202) 477-1234, Fax: (202) 477-6391.

Notes

The IEA Pre-primary Study: Early Childhood Care and Education in 11 Countries. Patricia Olmsted and David Weikart, eds. London: Elsevier Science Inc., 1995. 215 pp.

Review prepared by Robert G. Myers for *Comparative Education Review*.

This book reports on research results from Phase One of the ongoing Pre-primary Study of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The larger study, coordinated by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, is intended in its entirety to "...illuminate the nature and effects of various kinds of early childhood experiences on the long-term development of young children." (Olmsted and Weikart 1995, 1) Results of the research reported here will provide a basis for the next two phases of the Pre-primary study: an observational study of settings in Phase Two, and a follow-up of children from these settings into primary school in Phase Three. The eleven countries that participated in Phase One are: Belgium (French-speaking), China (People's Republic), Finland, Germany (Federal Republic), Hong Kong, Italy, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, and the United States.

Unlike the procedure followed in other IEA studies, with which many readers of this journal are familiar, the Pre-primary study involved carrying out household surveys. Through these surveys, a national sample of parents was interviewed in each of the eleven countries in order to gather the following information: 1) to identify daily life patterns of non-handicapped children between the ages of three years and six months and four years and six months; 2) to determine what kinds of provisions are available and used for care and education of children in that age range; 3) to discover what factors lead to use of different options; 4) to find out what relationships exist among diverse pre-primary settings; and 5) to see why parents choose the alternatives they do and how well they are satisfied with their choices. The samples chosen varied across countries from between 400 and almost 13,000 families.

The Pre-primary study is novel for several reasons. In addition to the use of household surveys and the decision to look at care and education from a family perspective, the study is unusual because: instead of looking at care and education in one particular formal setting outside the home (e.g., formal preschools), it recognises and examines the multiple settings in which a child is reared, considering the family as an ecosystem in interaction with other ecosystems. Also unusual is the fact that the data collection procedures and instruments were internationally devised by bringing together representatives of the various national research teams to participate *directly in the process, leading to agreement* on a basic set of questions for all, questions to which each country could then add items felt to be of particular interest. The instruments developed, such as the "daily routine chart," designed to gather information on an hourly basis about the primary caregiver, the location of the child, and the presence of other adults and children should be very helpful to other researchers working in the pre-primary field.

Fortunately, the authors do not try to oversimplify when presenting and interpreting the data. Indeed, the most striking impression at first reading is that for almost every category examined there is immense variation across countries and within countries (satisfaction with the services chosen seems to be an exception). Nevertheless, patterns are

UNICEF 2446 Murray-Lee

discerned and some general findings and conclusions are presented in the final chapter. Among these are the following:

- Use of out-of-home care and education is closely linked to the movement of women into the paid workforce, even more so than the search for better development and education for their children.
- Most children are served in no more than one extra-parental setting but a large number of children are, nevertheless, found in two or more settings.
- Government and religious sponsors together account for the majority of out-of-home care and education services (for children aged four) in all countries.
- The principal caregiver continues to be the mother in all countries; care in which the father is the only caregiver is virtually absent. This is so even though the median time per week spent by a child in organised facilities outside the home, while varying a great deal among countries, was found to be as high as forty-seven hours (in China) and forty-five hours (in Portugal).
- In most cases, care and education services are not well supported by auxiliary services such as health, special education, and social services.
- The level of satisfaction with the options chosen for care and education outside the home is high in all countries.

The presentation of results is organised by country in chapter seven to provide a nation-by-nation look for those who are more interested in a particular country than in the comparative data and analysis.

The comparative methodology used in this book is rather straightforward and simple, relying primarily on comparisons of the distributions of percentages. Almost no time is spent in the book providing contextual background for the various countries, probably because this was done at some length in the first pre-primary project publication titled *How Nations Serve Young Children*. Olmsted and Weikart, eds. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope Press, 1989. A bit more effort might have been devoted to bringing that contextual information into the interpretation of the results presented here.

In general, this book will be of considerable interest to students of childcare and early education, as well as to those interested in the application of household survey techniques to problems of socialisation and education in a comparative framework.

Poverty and Health

MARIE-THERESE FEURSTEIN
TALC PUBLICATION, 1996

This book looks at the way poverty affects peoples health, concentrating on new facts and fresh scientific evidence that have been emerging on the effects of poverty on health. *Poverty and Health* considers the various types of poverty and poses the question of how the poor can escape from the poverty cycle. It also presents new ideas to improve planning and implementing of action with the rural and urban poor. It is well illustrated with factual stories headed 'From Experience' to illustrate the situations discussed.

The book is written particularly for those who work in the development field and those taking basic or advanced development courses. It shows extension workers the links between poverty and health, and discusses ways to improve health and act against poverty.

Available from TALC, P.O. Box 49, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 5TX, United Kingdom. Price £2.75 postage and packing (£3.75 airmail).

New ERIC/EECE Electronic Journal Early Childhood Research and Practice

In 1998, ERIC/EECE will begin publication of the first refereed, electronic journal in early childhood education. *Early Childhood Research and Practice* (ECRP) will include reports of practice and research into practice related to the growth, development, learning, care, and education of children from birth to about age eight.

ECRP will emphasise articles reporting practice related research, classroom practice, issues in practice and parenting, and related policy matters. Brief descriptions of research and development in progress supplied by researchers will also be included. The journal will include a section for letters to the editor, a special regular column on early childhood-related matters on the Internet, articles and essays that present opinions and reflections, listings of recent publications abstracted and indexed in the ERIC database, and short communications of relevance to readers.

Manuscripts of approximately twenty-five double-spaced pages can be submitted electronically (via e-mail or on disk). For additional information and author guidelines, contact ericeece@uiuc.edu.

Meetings

Meeting of the Members of the International CG Secretariat

Washington D C
September 8–11, 1997

The International Secretariat of the Consultative Group (the original Secretariat plus the people who were formerly called the Regional Representatives) held its first meeting in Washington D C. The purpose of the meeting was to share plans for regionalisation and to create a coordinated Plan of Action for the coming year. On the afternoon of the third day the International Secretariat met with representatives from the Washington based partners. At the meeting the Regional Members of the Secretariat shared their Plans of Action for the coming year. On the fourth and fifth days meetings were set up between Members of the International Secretariat and individual CG partner organisations. The regions are represented as follows:

Caribbean: Janet Brown, Caribbean Child Development Centre

Central Asia: Ayla Gaksel, Mother Child Foundation, Turkey

Africa: Barnabas Otaala, University of Namibia, ECDNA

South Asia: Feny de los Angeles Bautista, Community of Learners Foundation

Latin America: Marta Arango, CINDE

Arab World: Jacqueline Stein, Arab Resource Collective

SAARC: Jim Irvine (pro tem), UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia

See pp. 47–50 for the Action Plans

International Consultation on Early Childhood Education and Special Educational Needs

UNESCO, Paris
September 1–4, 1997

The International Consultation on Early Childhood Education and Special Educational Needs was hosted by UNESCO on 1–4 September 1997. The Consultation was set within the framework and principles of the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education. The focus of the consultation was on the young child (birth to six). The participants all had an understanding of the value of early intervention to prevent and ameliorate conditions that put children 'at risk'. The guiding principle of the discussion was inclusion. The basic premise was that all children should learn together (i.e. all children are entitled to partake of services in the community together with their peers). Thus the Consultation focused on the provision of services for all children, rather than the needs of specific children. The challenge is how to create an understanding of inclusion and to develop inclusive programmes.

To address the challenge, mechanisms are being sought to bring together people committed to the development of early childhood services for children and their families, and those concerned about provision for children with special needs. Therefore, participants in the Consultation represented the medical, education, and social service sectors, as well as donor and UN agencies, international NGOs and government, all of whom brought experience in the development of inclusive early childhood programmes from all continents. The mix of participants allowed for the building of bridges to/with all levels of people working with children.

A Working Document was prepared for the Consultation that provided a background on the state of the art and the state of the practice in relation to inclusive early childhood programmes. In addition, a set of case studies was prepared that illustrated some of the issues in inclusive programming. (*First Steps: Stories of Inclusion in Early Childhood Education*, available from UNESCO.)

During the four-day Consultation there was a series of presentations and opportunities for small group discussion around the following themes: policy, programming, access, quality, assessment, building bridges across sectors and from national government to the community, partnerships between families and professionals, the transitions between and across services, training, sustainability (management and the development of services), and funding. Within the Consultation a set of conclusions and recommendations were put forward. The full report on the meeting will be available by the end of the year. Judith Evans attended the meeting on behalf of the Consultative Group.

EFA Steering Committee Meeting

UNESCO, Paris
September 29–October 1, 1997

The ninth meeting of the EFA Steering Committee was held at UNESCO. For the first time, there was opportunity for a thematic discussion, titled 'Dealing with the shortfalls in EFA'. Two shortfalls were identified: Early Childhood Care and Development, and Adult Education. The achievements and concerns within the ECCD field were presented and discussed. Among the members there was agreement that ECCD needed to be given greater attention. Part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the areas that should be included in the monitoring process, which should be undertaken as a part of the end-of-the-decade review of progress toward EFA. (Some of the suggested ECCD indicators can be found in the *Network Notes* section, under UNESCO). In addition, plans were made for the fourth global meeting of the Forum. Judith Evans represents the Consultative Group on the EFA Steering Committee.

Promoting Health, Growth and Development: A Review of Child Development and Nutrition Interventions

WHO, Geneva
October 1–3, 1997

In 1996 the responsibilities of the Division of Diarrhoeal and Acute Respiratory Disease Control at WHO were incorporated into the newly created Division of Child Health and Development (CHD), which itself is part of Family and Reproductive Health (Dr. T. Turmen, Executive Director). While the central focus of the Division continues to be mortality reduction, the broadened mandate of the new Division now includes physical and psychological development.

As a first step in establishing a sound base for planning future work in the area, the Division undertook a project to review current knowledge about the efficacy and effectiveness of interventions to improve child growth and development. The multidisciplinary team that participated in that effort completed a draft report which was reviewed at the three-day meeting in Geneva. Those participating in the meeting represented a diversity of donors, academics and practitioners. Two sub-groups were formed: one which focused on the development of research questions in need of further exploration to bring together health and psychosocial supports for families; the second group focused on the development of appropriate intervention strategies that could be developed by WHO and others. Judith Evans attended the meeting on behalf of the Consultative Group.

Regional Meetings/ Workshops

Regional Moves in Early Childhood Education and Development in the Caribbean: A Report on the Second Regional Conference on Early Childhood Education

Bridgetown, Barbados
April 1–5, 1997

by Janet Brown, Regional Member of the Secretariat Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

The Barbados Early Childhood Education Association, as host to this second regional conference, sought and received early assistance from the Caribbean Area Office of UNICEF and other external funders to stage a conference that could be truly regional in its focus. UNICEF played a signal role in its work with the planning committee, drawing on its October 1996 experience as host/organiser of a regional conference in Belize.

Following the model of the Belize meetings, the planning committee encouraged (via UNICEF sponsorship in most cases) four-person "official delegations" consisting of a senior government policy maker, an early childhood training representative from a teachers college or similar facility, a representative of any national organisation or association for early childhood educators, and a practitioner representative. Most of the seventeen English-speaking Caribbean

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countries which participated followed this formula at least in part; some sent several more delegates than these four. In all, nearly 300 delegates attended this conference—seventy overseas delegates and 220 from host country Barbados.

At the close of the six days of activity, the most frequently heard comment was: 'I've never been to a more satisfying meeting—we came out with concrete products and clear plans.' How did this come about? What were the elements which contributed to this outcome?

One was clearly a dedicated and flexible planning committee of Barbadian early childhood educators. They were determined from the start to offer practical lab-type workshops for ECE practitioners to challenge complacency and to offer new skills and ideas. But they were also willing to focus more attention on working toward a regional consensus for concrete actions to advance early childhood policies and programmes. As a result of the conference's directives, delegates from all levels of provision were able to take away applications of personal and professional relevance.

A second element contributing to success was the working documents provided to delegations for use before and during the conference. These were prepared by a team of consultants contracted during the preparation stage by UNICEF. All but late registrants from national delegations received, prior to the conference, a short questionnaire form, a rationale document posing the urgency and importance of addressing ECED for the Caribbean at this time, and a short paper on Quality Provision, all prepared to guide national reflections in preparing for the conference. Delegations were asked to promptly fax their questionnaires to organisers for compilation before the conference. In addition, delegations received a twenty-four page Draft Plan of Action for ECED in the Caribbean, as preparation for its review at the conference.

A third factor leading to the positive assessment of conference outcomes was the work on an agenda item brought forward from the first regional conference: the strengthening of national associations of early childhood educators/programme providers and the establishment of a regional association to serve as an umbrella network for all national groups. The encouragement to select conference delegates representing such national associations served this objective.

Before the end of the first day, two major working committees representing all country delegations were convened—one to develop a draft constitution for a regional association of early childhood professionals, and a second to review, amend, and synthesise the conference plenary for endorsement of the Draft Regional Plan of Action. The ongoing work of these committees, incorporating inputs from meetings of country delegates, paralleled the practical workshop activities and field visits available to conference delegates.

By the end of the meeting, a Plan of Action was re-drafted. Most of the original objectives and framework of the Plan remained intact, with amendments made primarily to clarify wording or concepts.

Political considerations sometimes tempered wording or called for specific action steps. This Plan of Action was endorsed by the full plenary on the last day of the conference. The endorsed Regional Plan of Action was forwarded to the June meeting of the CARICOM Ministers of Education which had already put early childhood education issues on its agenda.

The report of the constitutional drafting committee for a regional association was also received and discussed by the final day plenary. A draft constitution and recommendations for regional networking were discussed and then enthusiastically endorsed. Several tasks for continuing regional work in this direction were assigned to an interim executive. The constitution will be finalised at the next regional conference, proposed for two years hence in Jamaica.

Latin American Regional Activities

Foro sobre Educación Inicial (Early Education Forum)

Asuncion, Paraguay
October 7–10, 1997

The purpose of the Forum was to bring together people from different groups in Paraguay "to raise the national consciousness about the importance of early education and to integrate early education into public policy based on responsible proposals from different social sectors." The World Bank helped in the organisation of the meeting.

UNICEF 93-1837/Cindy Andrews

Networking Meeting (Segundo Encuentro de Redes de Niñez de América Latin)

Cartagena, Colombia
November 29–December 2, 1997

This workshop was organised by the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development and CINDE, as the regional member of the Secretariat, under the auspices of the World Bank; the InterAmerican Development Bank, and with support from UNICEF and the Consultative Group. The objective of the meeting was to continue the development of networking among Latin American organisations which serve young children and their families.

The specific objectives of the workshop were: to share knowledge and experiences; to create, in a cooperative way, a plan of action for the network that will continue the exchange of ideas; to identify common priorities and concrete actions that can be taken in order to increase the knowledge base, which in turn can guide programming and policy development in Latin America and identify gaps that need to be addressed; and to become familiar with electronic methods of communication and explore how they can be used to facilitate networking and the dissemination of knowledge. Proposals and projects were presented and suggestions made regarding ongoing funding.

African Regional Activities

Professional Institute for Africa (Regional Training Initiative)

Windhoek, Namibia
September 29–October 17, 1997

A three-week institute was held at the University of Namibia. There were twenty-six participants from eleven African countries (Lesotho, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Botswana, Gambia,

Malawi, Eritrea, Somalia, and Namibia). The principle objective of the Institute was to bring together experienced academic and programme professionals to share and learn from one another about ECCD, and to promote capacity building.

During the Institute, people shared their experiences in the development and implementation of early childhood programmes and policies. There were lectures which provided a conceptual framework for understanding the field, and participants developed guidelines for the creation of future programmes. Each participant (or country group) prepared a Plan of Action to be implemented during the coming year. In addition, participants expressed the desire to remain in contact with one another through the mechanism of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA).

The Institute was funded by UNICEF.

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

Dakar, Senegal
October 4–10, 1997

There was a meeting of the ADEA Bureau of African Ministers in Dakar in mid-October. The Early Childhood Working Group met during the meeting, drawing support from nineteen Eastern, Central, and Southern African countries and sixteen West African countries. The goals of the Working Group are:

- the formation and formalisation of an Africa-wide ECD network
- better conceptualisation of ECD in Africa
- the fostering of improved, consolidated and well-designed ECD programmes focusing on transition of the child from home to school, systematised and comprehensive parent-community awareness and education, and mainstreaming development of the girl child
- more relevant, quality ECD programmes with increased coverage of African children
- closer relationships and collaboration amongst individuals, institutions, and organisations working for the promotion of ECD in Africa
- capacity building in terms of improved management, research, and communication skills among the individuals and institutions in the network.

ECDNA—World Bank Regional Meeting in Africa

Capetown, South Africa
December 1–3, 1997

The purpose of the meeting was to create a forum for practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and donors to recommend action to build on existing best practices, to build capacity, to create policy, and to promote multi-sectoral (integrated) early childhood development programs in the Africa region. The focus of the meeting was on policy and programmes for children birth to three. The case studies on Kenya, Mauritius, and South Africa (funded by the World Bank), were shared and served as stimulus for small-group discussions. A second part of the meeting focused on the further development of the ECDNA network.

Southeast Asian Regional Activities

Parent Education Institute

Singapore
November 3–14, 1997

A two-week institute was held in Singapore, sponsored by the Regional Training and Resource Centre for ECCE in Asia (RTRC Asia), and UNICEF's East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, with assistance from UNICEF New York, University of Victoria, Canada, the Consultative Group, and Save the Children (USA). The objectives of the institute were: to promote a greater awareness of the importance of a more integrated, holistic, and ecological (family-focused, community-based) perspective of early childhood care and development (ECCD); to analyse different working models of parent and community education, mobilisation, and participation around ECCD; to frame the provision of ECCD services within the context of the realisation of child rights; to provide participants with new knowledge in areas such as health and nutrition, cognitive, psychological, and brain development; and to develop country action plans and a regional ECCD network in order to improve parent programming and projects in ECCD. The institute involved plenary sessions, discussion groups, and field trips to existing programmes.

Calendar

March 23–27, 1998

South Asia Interagency Seminar/Workshop on ECCD

Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University
Karachi, Pakistan

The UNICEF Regional Office has agreed to work with the Consultative Group on ECCD to facilitate the development of a network in parts of South Asia where ECCD has not become part of the public policy agenda. ECCD is planned as one of the priorities for UNICEF's South Asia office for 1998.

The Workshop will link to an International Seminar on ECCD, scheduled for 24–25 March, sponsored by the Institute for Educational Development (IED) located at the Aga Khan University (AKU). Policy is a major but not exclusive focus of the seminar.

At present, the Workshop is still being planned. It will be multi-disciplinary, with a focus on community and homebased ECCD and the child 0–3 years of age. In the Workshop there will be discussion of programmes in action which illustrate what has been done, with regional and country-level action plans as a major outcome.

For more information, contact:
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or the Consultative Group
E-mail: info@ecdgroup.com

July 13, 1998

Children, Technology and Culture: The 2nd International Conference on Children and Social Competence
Brunel University, West London, UK

A note from the Conference Organisers
Childhood is increasingly saturated by technology: from television to the Internet, video games to 'video-nasties', camcorders to personal computers. Despite the development of specifically child-oriented technologies such as computer software packages, children also engage with and exercise competence in a whole range of technologies unmediated and uncensored by adults in the home, at school, and in the public social world.

The interplay of children and technology poses critical questions for how we understand the nature of childhood in modern society. What kinds of changes are technologies bringing to children's social worlds?

This conference aims to bring together researchers from a range of disciplines to further our understanding of the implications and consequences of children's relationships with technology.

We are seeking papers to address a range of relevant themes including, but not restricted to, the following:

—children in interaction with technology

—the social relations of childhood and technology

—technologies and the constitution of childhood

—technology as an arena of social competence

—relationships between gender, age, peer groups, and technology

Proposals are invited in the form of a 500-word abstract which should be submitted to the organisers (below) by 1 March 1998. Decisions will be given by 31 March 1998. Delegates will receive separate details of registration and accommodation fees.

One copy of the abstract should be submitted to each of the organisers:

Ian Hutchby, Department of Human Sciences, Brunel University, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, Middlesex, UK. (E-mail submissions will be accepted at: Ian.Hutchby@brunel.ac.uk)

Jo Moran-Ellis, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, Guildford GU2 5XH, Surrey, UK. (E-mail submissions will be accepted at: soc1jm@soc.surrey.ac.uk)

Calendar

August 11–13, 1998

International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The conference is organised by The Dutch Association of Environmental Medicine and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment, in collaboration with Childwatch International. The interest of Childwatch International is to put the child's susceptibility and the implications for environmental legislation on the agenda. This was inspired by the presentation, *What on Earth—environmental exposure and implications for child health*, by Denise Avard, given at the Urban Childhood conference held this past summer. Childwatch encourages you to take a look at the programme on the Internet (http://www.inter.nl.net/users/nvmm), and to consider submitting a paper.

For more information, contact Childwatch
E-mail: childwatch@uio.no
Fax: (47 22) 85 50 28

The *Coordinators' Notebook* a publication of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development is published twice annually

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THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT (CG) is an international, interagency group dedicated to improving the condition of young children at risk. The CG grounds its work in a cross-disciplinary view of child care and development.

Launched in 1984, the CG has taken as its main purpose the fostering of communication among international donor agencies and their national counterparts, among decision-makers, funders, researchers, programme providers, parents and communities with the goal of strengthening programmes benefitting young children and their families.

The Consultative Group is administered and represented by its Secretariat. The Group includes a broad-based network of participating organisations and individuals who share a commitment to fostering the well-being and healthy development of young children. Administrative backstopping is provided by Education Development Center (EDC).

The *Coordinators' Notebook* is prepared by the Secretariat of the CG with support from UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, the World Bank, the Aga Khan Foundation, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, Christian Children's Fund, High/Scope Foundation, InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), International Youth Foundation (IYF), Save the Children USA, and Academy for Educational Development (AED).

GOALS

TO INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE BASE - The CG gathers, synthesizes and disseminates information on children's development, drawing from field experiences, traditional wisdom and scientific research.

TO SERVE AS A CATALYST - The CG works to increase awareness of issues affecting children, developing materials and strategies to help move communities, organisations and governments from rhetoric to practice, from policy to programming.

TO BUILD BRIDGES - The CG fosters networking among those with common concerns and interests, working across sectoral divisions, putting people in touch with the work of others by organising meetings, by disseminating information through publications, and by serving as a communications point.

TO SERVE AS A SOUNDING BOARD - The CG engages in dialogue with funders and decision-makers about developments in the field, providing the base for policy formulation, planning, programming and implementation.

Members of the Secretariat occasionally provide technical assistance to individual organisations in programme design, implementation and evaluation, and in the writing of technical papers and reports.

The *Coordinators' Notebook* is produced twice annually. It is one of our networking tools. Each issue focusses on a particular issue or topic, as well as offering network news. We try to provide information on the most appropriate research, field experience and practices to benefit individuals working with young children and their families. We encourage you to share this information with the other networks you take part in. Feel free to copy portions of this *Notebook* and disseminate the information to those who could benefit from it. Please let us know about any programmes or efforts benefitting young children and their families in which you may be involved.

For further information and to subscribe contact:

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